

**Annie Abbott
"The Little Georgia Magnet"
and the
True Story of Dixie Haygood**



**Susan J. Harrington
&
Hugh T. Harrington**

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Printed in the U.S.

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Dedication

Both of us learned to appreciate history from our grandmothers. This has been a lifelong gift that has provided us with a combination of entertainment and enjoyment, as well as an understanding and appreciation of our past.

Therefore, we would like to dedicate this book to our grandmothers:

Augusta Briggs Austin, 1886 - 1978

and

Caroline Thompson Harrington, 1874-1969

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The family gave us complete access to Dixie Haygood's Autograph Album, 1892 Diary and photograph album. While several of the Annie Abbott imitators used similar or identical names to Annie Abbott, Dixie Haygood's Autograph Album and Diary have allowed the authors to identify her itinerary for the first time. Without the Diary and Autograph Album nothing meaningful could ever have been written about Dixie Haygood and the Annie Abbott Act. To Connie, Shirley, Art and Colleen, and Anne, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude.

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It was also our good fortune to locate Leonard B. (Lenny) Abbey who helped untangle the mystery of Richard N. Abbey and Theodore H. Abbey, who became husbands and managers of Annie Abbott and Annie May Abbott. Lenny, the grandson of Theodore H. Abbey, willingly shared his grandfather's story, pictures, and insights that led us to a much greater understanding and appreciation of the sequence of Annie Abbotts, as well as their complex personal lives.

The above people's willingness to share and the good fortune that brought together the stories of the Haygood, Abbey, and Tatro families and placed those stories into our hands is no doubt a miracle. In some cases family members had to work very hard to get that information to us. The authors feel that they have been blessed to be the recipients of these documents. To explain how this generosity happened brings to mind a phrase often used by Annie Abbott to explain the power: "I do not know what it is" that made this happen, but we are grateful for that kind of "power" and the close friends we have made among the family members. We shall value that friendship forever.

We also received assistance from magic historians Barry H. Wiley, Michael Claxton and Steven Brehe. Magician Ben Robinson helped us, as neophytes, with magic. In addition, we received encouragement and support from magic aficionado Bill Vande Water. Tony Wolf aided with information about Annie May Abbott's performances in Australia and New Zealand.

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child felt the power of Annie Abbott. Dr. Bob Wilson gave his always-helpful insights into Milledgeville history. Loretta Lipsey allowed us to inspect her Annie Abbott relics. Two reviewers provided detailed and invaluable suggestions that greatly improved our original manuscript: O. H. (Harry) Glover and Josephine King. While they reviewed the manuscript in excruciating detail, any grammatical errors or questions regarding the content remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

Lastly, we must give a nod to Annie Abbott herself. We have been told, by reliable researchers, that on occasion when working on the life of Dixie Haygood a frightening black form appeared that stopped them from further work. We never saw or felt that presence. In fact, more than once when we were in the depths of seemingly impossible research, what must be considered the power of the Little Georgia Magnet put us on the right track. It happened in circumstances that cannot be passed off as mere coincidence. We strongly believe she wanted us to succeed. Detractors may scoff.....but they were not there to witness! We trust that Annie Abbott is satisfied with the result.

Introduction

Milledgeville, Georgia remembers Dixie Haygood as the witch in its Memory Hill Cemetery. More than twelve years ago, when we embarked on this quest, we began with the scanty rumors that she was a witch who had performed feats of strength before “all the crowned heads of Europe.” Little did we know as we scratched the surface that we were uncovering one of the most unusually successful women of her time. Her stage name of Annie Abbott would become a household word.

The story of Dixie Haygood and Annie Abbott would have been impossible without the assistance of her descendants who generously shared family documents with us. All researchers in the past have run into the roadblock of multiple women named Annie Abbott performing similar exhibitions; all of them claiming to be the original Annie Abbott. Differentiating between the Annie Abbotts was an impossible research problem.

We overcame the impossible problem with the aid of Dixie Haygood’s Autograph book (see Appendix A). On the surface this shabby book of unknown scrawled names, dates and places seemed meaningless. However, it was the key that solved the problem of separating Dixie Haygood from other performers. As she travelled, Dixie Haygood would note the date and place of the performance. She then had witnesses sign her autograph book. Using the dates and places as a guide we could now follow Dixie Haygood in her travels through the United States and Europe. Accounts of performances and scientific investigations, for the first time ever, could be linked to Dixie Haygood exclusively. It was the major breakthrough that previous researchers had sought in vain.

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All Annie Abbott researchers have been stymied by the lack of differentiation between the various Annie Abbotts. We too found that all articles or books written by people who had not witnessed the events first hand had little value. The vast majority of our research has been with original documents created at the time the events took place or written by participants. It is these documents that provide the purest look at the events surrounding her career and are the foundation of this book. We have drawn heavily upon these documents, rather than our own interpretation, to give the most accurate description possible. Therefore, this book may be viewed as a documentary of the life of Annie Abbott.

In addition to the Autograph Book the family gave us access to Dixie Haygood’s 1892 diary, which provided private insights into her life at the high point of her career. Her photograph album was badly decomposed but some identifiable images were salvageable. Some of them are included in this book and are published here for the first time.

We followed the evidence wherever it led us. That trail took us beyond Dixie Haygood as her story was inextricably connected with the lives of others beyond her children and her spouses. It included her managers and Annie Abbott imitators, too. To tell the story of Dixie Haygood and Annie Abbott we tell the story of these other players as well.

To plumb the intricate relationships of not only Dixie Haygood but her extended “family” of interconnected participants, we used a variety of genealogy research techniques. To our delight, and amazement, we were able to track living descendants of the major players in the story who were extremely helpful in providing information and documentation on their pieces of the puzzle.

The story of Dixie Haygood and Annie Abbott is not simply about this one woman, her stage performances and those with whom she interacted. The story is also about women in the late Victorian Age, spiritualism, magic, science, vaudeville and life at the turn of the 20th century. Little has been written about women’s lives and relationships during the

rise of vaudeville. We learned much as we saw how these women's lives influenced others and how complicated their relationships with men often were. It was a difficult life and one that many would find unattractive, while others may see it as an exciting time in the history of the theater.

Living as we have with Dixie Haygood's Annie Abbott for the last decade has been an ongoing experience beyond our wildest expectations. If we can convey to the readers at least some of that adventure into the past we will be satisfied.

Chapter 1 - The Electric Girls

There was thunder and lightning on the night of September 18, 1883 in Cedartown, Georgia. Fourteen-year-old Lulu Hurst remembered the night as a severe, frightening one. While she and her visiting cousin were trying to sleep, they were startled by a quick, muffled, popping sound that seemed to come from nowhere.

After investigation, they found that the popping noises seemed to come from under their pillows, and the bedding was removed in an attempt to find the source. But there was nothing to be found. The entire household was awakened and became alarmed, and after much discussion, it was decided that the sounds were caused by electricity -- the atmosphere was charged with electricity from the storm. Having convinced themselves that electricity was the cause, the family went back to bed. Even though the advent of electricity and electric lights in the little towns of Georgia was well in the future, the concept of electricity as a powerful force seemed to be a logical explanation.¹

The next night was a beautiful night of calm weather, but to the family's alarm, the noises began again! Neighbors were brought in to help solve the mystery, but again there was no obvious explanation. Suggestions of an intelligent force or the manifestation of departed spirits were offered. The mysterious "Force" was asked questions, and it replied with the right answers: for example, when asked the time or a person's age, it answered with the right number of pops. The "Force," while intangible, acted upon matter and showed not only intelligence but the ability to mind-read.²

After further investigation, it was realized that the "Force" only acted when Hurst touched the object and the object, in turn, was touched or held by others. When several strong

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young men tried to hold onto a chair with Hurst's hands on it, an "Unknown Power" threw them about and battered them as they attempted to steady the chair. The chair would quiver and gyrate about the room. The men declared that they felt shocked as if by an electric current.³

The combination of apparent spirit manifestations and electricity was nothing new. In 1846, a fourteen-year-old French peasant girl named Angélique Cotton, known as "The Electric Girl," manifested a curious force of repulsion of certain objects, which darted away when she came near. She could touch a chair holding a large man, and the chair and man were promptly upset. Starting in the 1840s, the spiritualistic phenomena took hold both in Europe and the U.S.⁴ It was often associated with electricity or telegraph lines enabled by electricity, thus generating the concept of the "spiritual telegraph" that described communications between this world and the next through human mediums.⁵ As spiritualism evolved, electricity was suggested as an alternative answer for those things attributed by spiritualists to unseen intelligent agents.⁶

The phenomenon of the "electric girls," including Hurst, who followed Angélique Cotton has long been compared to the phenomena of poltergeists but at the time was attributed to a physical force similar to electricity.⁷ Movements of tables and chairs were attributed to "a redundancy of electricity congregated upon the involuntary nerves"; table raps were said to be caused by "an electromagnetic discharge from the fingers and toes of the medium"⁸ or by discharge of excess electricity from spirits.

Not only was electricity connected with the unexplainable force behind inanimate objects, electricity and magnetism were seen as cures for a variety of health problems. Thus healing was a natural add-on to the spiritualist's abilities. In the early 19th century, *animal magnetism* was seen as a fluid or force that pervaded the universe and was especially concentrated in animal nervous systems and magnets. A sick person was believed to be one whose contact with the magnetic fluid that

fills the universe had been obstructed; being “magnetized” or having magnets or therapists’ hands pass over parts of a patient’s body could rearrange this fluid and have a healing effect.

Hurst went on to exhibit the “Power” and became known as “The Georgia Wonder,” appearing in 1884-1885 and performing feats similar to Angélique Cotton. Although Hurst never believed she was a spiritualist, others did.⁹ She astounded the audience at Wallack’s Theatre in New York by pushing strong men around the stage or by lifting portly men sitting in chairs off the ground. Hurst in a short two-year span became so widely known that her name was used as a brand for tobacco, cigars and soap,¹⁰ and she made an estimated \$70,000 in just two years on the stage.¹¹

Spiritualists were mainly women. In the mid-nineteenth century, the popularity of spiritualism allowed women to travel and take the stage before mixed audiences at a time when women could not easily speak publicly with propriety.¹² Moreover, female spiritualists could assume otherwise forbidden male roles, not only by being allowed to speak on stage, but by performing feats of superhuman strength.¹³ The late 19th century was also a time when people enjoyed being entertained with feats of strength or physical skill,¹⁴ and spiritualists, such as the electric girls, whose power involved such feats, gained much attention.

Spiritualists, including the so-called electric girls, appeared to be able to violate the laws of nature as we know them.¹⁵ It was in this environment that electric girls started springing up all over Georgia: Mattie Lee Price of Bartow County, a Mrs. Coleman (real name of Mrs. Charles Freeman) from Fulton County, Mamie Simpson of Marietta, and Dixie Annie Jarratt Haygood of Milledgeville.¹⁶ Times were hard and performing exhibitions of the “Power” was a way to bring in an income.

Southern women, particularly in this time period, were known for being quiet and genteel. But there was the additional influence of the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837-

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1901, when Victorian and religious attitudes mandated that ladies be selfless, passive and weak and that women should not preach in public.¹⁷ After the Civil War in the South in particular, religious leaders and others disagreed with the increased involvement of women in activities that took them beyond the home or church. Such leaders resisted the expansion of women's roles, hoping that women would return to their traditional roles as wives who preserved religion and morality in the home and who relied upon their men as their protectors.¹⁸ Yet the War brought the need for women to find a way to support themselves and their families. Many men were killed in the War with the result that some women never married due to the shortage of available men. Other women were left with disabled husbands.

Alternatives for these women were limited. For a lucky few, going on stage was an answer. That women, such as the electric girls, would display physical strength upon the stage was a novelty that was especially intriguing to audiences of the era.

Spiritualist associations arose, but the term "spiritualist" was sometimes problematic, for it was associated with witchcraft. In England, where much of the Annie Abbott story unfolds, the British Witchcraft Act of 1735 was still in existence and stated that a person who *pretended* to have the power to call up spirits, or foretell the future, or cast spells, or discover the whereabouts of stolen goods was to be punished as a vagrant and a con artist, subject to fines and imprisonment. Although most charges against fortune-telling, astrology and spiritualism were prosecuted in England under the Vagrancy Act (1824), there were some prosecutions under the Witchcraft Act as late as 1944. It was not until 1951 that the British Witchcraft Act was finally repealed and replaced by the Fraudulent Mediums Act.¹⁹

Thus those giving exhibitions of supernormal power walked a fine line between witchcraft, spiritualism, and entertainment. If a person claimed spiritualistic powers or spiritual manifestations but used tricks, it was deemed "fraud."

Audiences at spiritualistic exhibitions were on the lookout for fraud and often shouted out (usually in fun) if they believed they had detected a trick.

In the U.S. and London, committees of local well-known men were appointed to study whether the alleged spiritualistic phenomena were genuine or fraudulent.²⁰ In London, a learned committee called the London Dialectical Society, as well as various séance committees, gave reports favorable to the psychic phenomena of sounds proceeding from inanimate objects, unexplained movements of heavy bodies without mechanical or muscular force, and sounds and movements occurring without contact with, but often at the request of, the supposed spiritualist. In England, a second society for research was established in 1882, called the Society for Psychical Research (SPR); it still exists today, describing itself as the first society to conduct organized scholarly research into human experiences that challenge contemporary scientific models. In the U.S., a similar organization with the same name was founded in Boston in 1884. While not a scientific body, it did have eminent scientists among its members, who generally used systematic and critical procedures when analyzing psychic phenomena.²¹ The SPR became very interested in Dixie Haygood (Annie Abbott) and wrote about her in their journals.

Closely related to many of the spiritualists and their exhibitions of strength were the feats of conjurors and magicians, another source of entertainment. Magicians duplicated the effects of the “spirit” mediums during the third quarter of the 19th century but disassociated themselves from the supernatural by advertising their performances as scientific “experiments.” Many acts of spiritualists and magicians seemed identical except that magicians often required elaborate accessories, thus confining them to larger cities where electricity and other necessities were available.²² An example is Robert-Houdin (the man from whom Harry Houdini took his stage name), who was among the first magicians to use electricity in his act. Houdin used an empty wooden box that

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anyone could lift until he made it immovable by turning on an electromagnet hidden under the stage floor.²³ Spiritualists required no such accessories.

Magicians, like spiritualists, provided mass entertainment in larger halls or theaters, but few female magicians existed at this time. Meanwhile, electric girls and other spiritualists would often travel with a male manager so as to have his protection and not appear too unladylike in the Victorian age.

The electric girls, Mattie Lee Price, Annie Abbott and Lulu Hurst, all traveled with male managers, which enabled them to appear as genteel and in need of protection while exhibiting strong physical force on stage. The stage manager also did most of the talking and controlled the flow of the exhibition.

Not only was it a time of change for women in the Victorian period, it was a time of change in the theater system. Hoping to draw a potential audience from females and families, "polite" variety programs began in several New York theaters in the early 1880s. The age of vaudeville in the U.S. was about to begin, but it was not until the 1890s that theater circuits spanned the country and vaudeville became the vogue. The Annie Abbott Act, as it came to be known, arrived on the scene just as these transitions were occurring in the 1880s and 1890s. Particularly in larger cities, vaudeville of the 1890s featured continuous performances for up to 12 hours, with the continuous performance format lasting for almost two decades before the big-time theaters returned to a two-a-day format in the early twentieth century.²⁴ In Britain the entertainment venue that corresponded to vaudeville was "variety" in the music hall. As in the U.S., the 1880s in Britain saw an emergence of women onto the stage and into the audience. The music halls of the 1890s also typically featured a number of back-to-back miscellaneous acts, often including musical tunes, comedy, legerdemain (magic tricks), and acrobatics.

Dixie Annie Jarratt was born Dec. 13, 1860 in Milledgeville, Georgia, the capital of Georgia at the time of the Civil War.²⁵ It was in Milledgeville that Georgia voted to

secede from the Union in 1861, and it was in Milledgeville less than four years later that General William Tecumseh Sherman went “marching through Georgia” on his way to the sea and victory over the South. And so it was that Dixie Annie Jarratt grew up in a Southern town in the heart of Dixie that had been thrown into a state of poverty after defeat.

It is in this environment that Dixie Haygood’s story unfolds. Was she a spiritualist? A witch? A magician? A healer? An exceptionally strong woman? Or something else? That is the question that was asked from the 1880s well into the 20th century, and even now. Her story and life, and those she affected, are described in detail for the first time in the pages before you.

¹ It was not until about 1890 that electric lights appeared in Milledgeville (*Union Recorder*, 17 December 1889).

² Lulu Hurst’s autobiography, as reproduced in Barry H. Wiley, *The Georgia Wonder: Lulu Hurst & The Secret That Shook America*, Seattle, WA: Hermetic Press, Inc., Chapter 1.

³ Lulu Hurst in her autobiography as reproduced by Barry H. Wiley, *The Georgia Wonder: Lulu Hurst & The Secret That Shook America*, Seattle, WA: Hermetic Press, Inc., pp. 9-10.

⁴ A. Campbell Holms, *The Facts of Psychic Science and Philosophy, Collated and Discussed*. University Books, Inc., New Hyde Park, New York, 1969.

⁵ Anne Braude, *Radical Spirits*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, p. 5.

⁶ R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*, New York, 1977, p. 111.

⁷ J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology*, Vol. 1 (A-L), 4th edition, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale Publishing, 1996, pp. 398-399; H. Butterworth, “Electrical Persons and Places,” *Appleton’s Journal: Literature, Science, and Art*, Vol. 4, Issue 85, Nov. 12, 1870, pp. 585-586.

⁸ *Spirit Manifestations Examined and Explained, etc.*, by John Bovee Dods. New York, 1854, as described in *Mediums of the 19th Century*, by Frank Podmore, New York: University Books, Inc., p. 41.

⁹ Lulu Hurst in her autobiography as reproduced by Barry H. Wiley, *The Georgia Wonder: Lulu Hurst & The Secret That Shook America*, Seattle, WA: Hermetic Press, Inc., p. 26.

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- ¹⁰ Lulu Hurst, (*The Georgia Wonder*), *Writes her Autobiography, and for the First Time Explains and Demonstrates the Great Secret of her Marvelous Power*, Rome, Ga, 1897, p. 65.
- ¹¹ Barry H. Wiley, *The Georgia Wonder: Lulu Hurst & The Secret That Shook America*, Seattle, WA: Hermetic Press, Inc., p. XX; see also E. Merton Coulter, "Lulu Hurst, 'The Georgia Wonder,'" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 55, Spring 1971, p. 55.
- ¹² Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston, 1989), 84-98.
- ¹³ Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America*, Boston, 1989, 84-98; R. Laurence Moore, *White Crows*, p. 111.
- ¹⁴ E. Merton Coulter, "Lulu Hurst, 'The Georgia Wonder,'" *Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 55, Spring 1971, p. 26.
- ¹⁵ A. Campbell Holms, *The Facts of Psychic Science and Philosophy, Collated and Discussed*. University Books, Inc., New Hyde Park, New York, 1969.
- ¹⁶ *Athens Banner-Watchman*, 10 March 1885; *Atlanta Constitution*, 30 July 1884, p. 7, col. 5.
- ¹⁷ R. Laurence Moore, *White Crows*, pp. 107-108.
- ¹⁸ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, *New Women of the New South: The Leaders of the Woman Suffrage Movement in the Southern States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 7-8.
- ¹⁹ Vanessa Chambers. "The Witchcraft Act wasn't about women on brooms," *The Guardian*, Wednesday 24 January 2007, p. 33, retrieved 8 February 2010 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/jan/24/comment.comme nt3>.
- ²⁰ A. Campbell Holms, *The Facts of Psychic Science and Philosophy, Collated and Discussed*. University Books, Inc., New Hyde Park, New York, 1969.
- ²¹ A. Campbell Holms, *The Facts of Psychic Science and Philosophy, Collated and Discussed*. University Books, Inc., New Hyde Park, New York, 1969.
- ²² Charles Joseph Pecor, *The Magician on the American Stage 1752-1874* (Washington, D.C., 1977), 180, 290, 294.
- ²³ Milbourne and Maurine Christopher, *The Illustrated History of Magic*, Portsmouth, NH, 1996, p. 149.
- ²⁴ Rick Easton, "Vaudeville, A History," University of Virginia, retrieved on 19 March 2010 from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma02/easton/vaudeville/vaudevillemain.html>
- ²⁵ Her birthday is determined from her obituary, a series of censuses and her May 1892 passport application.

Chapter 2 - The Start of a Career

Dixie Annie Jarratt was the daughter of a “tinner” or tinsmith, James A. Jarratt, in Milledgeville, Georgia, a small, dusty country town. She was the second youngest of a large family.²⁶ On July 9, 1876, at age 15, Dixie joined the Methodist church.²⁷ She would be a lifelong church member and, as Annie Abbott, would perform on behalf of the church. Because of her religious beliefs, she did not believe it was right to perform on Sundays. She married Charles N. Haygood on April 28, 1878. She was 17 years old. A small, soft-spoken woman, she had a great deal of curiosity about the world and, despite not having much formal education, could read and write well.

As did many Georgians, she and Charles had hopes of doing better than what post-Civil War Georgia could provide. Just after their marriage and before Thanksgiving of that year they moved to Waco, Texas where Charles worked in a grocery store.²⁸ Their first child, Hattie Clifford Haygood, was born in Waco on May 11, 1879. The couple’s anniversary would forever hold a grim memory as on April 28, 1880 little Hattie died.²⁹

Waco did not bring all that Charles and Dixie had hoped for, and in May Dixie returned to her mother’s home in Milledgeville for the birth of her second child, Maud Clopton Haygood, who was born July 12th. After settling family affairs in Waco, Charles joined the family in Milledgeville in November. They never returned to Texas.³⁰

Maud’s birth was followed by Fred Hampton Haygood, born on March 24, 1883. The young family was now living happily in Milledgeville where Charles worked as a deputy marshal. They resided quietly in a small house on East Hancock Street.³¹

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Beginning in 1884 and continuing through 1885 the newspapers had been filled with the experiments, or tests as they were called, performed by electric girl Lulu Hurst. This Georgia teenager was a great hit on the theatrical circuit where she performed remarkable and mysterious feats of strength that seemingly defied logic. She appeared at the Opera House in Milledgeville February 17, 1885.³²

The crowd waited in eager anticipation for Hurst's appearance. They had read and heard about umbrellas being torn to pieces and strong men being overpowered by a simple touch of her hand. First her manager stepped out in front of the audience and announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce you to Miss Lulu Hurst, the world-renowned magnetic girl. This 'Georgia Wonder' possesses an extraordinary amount of animal magnetism, which has astounded physicians and scientists alike. She is capable of making matter obedient to her will by concentrating her mind and bringing the power of her magnetic force to bear. She is able to lift astonishing weights with her open hands. But this is not a test of strength -- it is the result of her unknown 'Power.'

"Among other things, Miss Hurst, with her open palms, will lift three men of this audience, while they sit in a chair. And she will do many more exhibitions of strength after that.

"For this first test, I wish the assistance of a few strong men. May I have three strong men from the audience for this first test?"³³

Charles Haygood, a large man of about 200 pounds, volunteered. The volunteers were asked to sit on the chair in a pile. One sat in the normal position and another sat on his lap facing him while another lay across their legs. Hurst lightly touched the back of the chair and it started rocking and threw the men onto the floor. The audience howled with laughter at the sight of the three large men scattered on the floor. Hurst chuckled.

The next test was the attempt to lift Hurst from the floor. She stood with her arms bent at the elbows. The strong men were invited to lift her by the arms. When she willed it, she

could be lifted into the air, but when the power was exerted, no one, of any strength, could lift her.

Another test involved a pool cue. The cue was held horizontally in her open palms at shoulder height. Two men were asked to slowly and deliberately push against the pool cue



Lulu Hurst throwing men off the chair with the touch of her hand.

(Source: *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 26, 1884)

in an effort to push the lady backwards. The men struggled, grunting and clenching their teeth, as Hurst withstood their efforts.

A similar test with the pool cue involved four or more men holding the cue vertically with the tip about a foot from the floor. Hurst placed her open hand on the cue and then told the men to slowly push it to the floor. To their amazement no matter how hard they struggled they could not force the cue to the floor.

Hurst brought out an umbrella and asked a man to grasp

it. The umbrella jerked and twisted all over the stage while the man struggled to maintain his grasp. The umbrella flew up, curved overhead, and turned inside out, a perfect wreck. All the while she would only gently touch it with her hand. Hurst purred like a kitten as the man's face turned red and the

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audience roared with laughter. An enjoyable evening of entertainment was had by all.

Clearly, Dixie watched the performance of Hurst very closely. Going home she talked with Charles about Hurst's exhibitions of strength, and together she and Charles tried to duplicate it. Dixie found she had a knack for it, even though Hurst was a much larger, stronger girl than the diminutive Dixie. Soon, they were able to perform Hurst's feats as well, or perhaps better, than Hurst herself. Dixie's first performance, a benefit for the Milledgeville militia company called the Baldwin Blues, took place only three weeks after Hurst had demonstrated her abilities. Dixie, appearing as Mrs. C. N. Haygood, told the newspaper that she had had the "power within her" for "at least ten years" but had not told anyone but her husband.³⁴

Dixie was a great success on the local stage. On March 12th she appeared in Eatonton and on the 16th, in Sparta.³⁵ March 20th saw her in Macon at the Academy of Music, now known as the Grand Opera House.

She is described as being a "petite lady with a pleasant face, sharp black eyes, and a genial expression." The comparison with the successful Hurst was unavoidable. The *Macon Telegraph* commented that "if Lulu Hurst, heavy, ungainly and awkward, can master the curiosity of Americans, Dixie Haygood, small, pleasant and graceful, can certainly hope to evoke an equal interest."³⁶

The newspaper explained Dixie's sudden exhibition of her abilities by saying

Although she has been conscious of possessing a mysterious power for many years, she has never attempted to take notice of or exert it until the recent appearance of Lulu Hurst in the old capital [i.e., Milledgeville, previously the capital of Georgia]. Mrs. Haygood attended one of the performances given by Miss Hurst, and went away fully convinced that she could do everything Miss Hurst

*performed. The several efforts of the "Georgia Wonder" were attempted and were successful in every instance. Her friends soon became acquainted with the fact, and induced her to give public exhibitions of her power. This she consented to do, and since the discovery of her ability in this direction, has been entertaining the small towns of Georgia.*³⁷

The performance at the Academy of Music was the model for Dixie Haygood's performances throughout her career and was consistent with the use of committees to detect tricks or fraud in the exhibition. She would be on the stage with her manager as well as a select "committee" of prominent local doctors, professors and citizens who would participate in the tests of her powers. The committee would get a close-up view of the proceedings. Often their reactions would be quoted in the newspaper the following day and thus provide publicity as well as an aura of respectability to the performances.

The *Macon Telegraph* described the scene:

*Seated on the stage with Mrs. Haygood was her husband, who weighs probably two hundred pounds or more. His form and figure was in striking contrast to that of his wife. She weighs not more than ninety-five pounds, and is the merest scrap of humanity. Yet the assertion is ventured here that she is the "heaviest little woman" that ever made a bow before the Macon public or attempted to handle the heavy weights of the town.*³⁸

With husband Charles acting as manager on the stage, the committee members were invited to come forward. They both witnessed and participated in various experiments. In one case four of them were seated on the same chair. With a light touch of her open palm the chair responded by rocking violently from side to side, spilling the men onto the floor, to the great delight

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of the audience. In another test she held a pool cue horizontally in front herself at shoulder level, with her open palms, while she stood on one foot. Four strong men would push the pool cue toward her in an attempt to push her backwards. They were unable to move her. Charles Haygood invited the men of the committee, and men from the audience, to lift Dixie from the floor. They were all unsuccessful.

The *Macon Telegraph* reported "Mrs. Haygood fully demonstrated her ability to handle the strongest on the stage and at times the strength of several combined. She also proved a worthy rival of Miss Hurst, and an electric wonder of very fine promise. The performance lasted about an hour, and was greatly enjoyed by the audience who dispersed in a good humored mood."³⁹

There was talk of pitting the skills and powers of Lulu Hurst and Dixie Haygood against each other but it never materialized. Immediately after her appearance in Macon, Dixie announced that she was going to take her show on the road and travel West. But a tour was not imminent as Dixie was pregnant with her fourth child. On February 7, 1886, Charles Nathaniel Haygood, Jr. (Charlie) was born in Milledgeville. Three weeks later tragedy struck.

Charles Haygood worked for the city of Milledgeville as Deputy Marshal. One would think that in a country town of just over three thousand people being a marshal would have been a non-demanding job. Normally, it would have been. However, there was a hotly contested vote before the public that stirred emotions to a fever pitch. The voters had to decide whether the county would allow alcohol to be consumed or would favor Prohibition. The issue was debated literally in the streets, with speakers standing upon cotton bales.

P. T. Ennis, from atop a cotton bale, stridently proclaimed the virtues and rights of the anti-Prohibitionists. Members of the Ennis family had long been associated with distilling liquor. There is some question whether their operation was legal or not. In the past they had had several brushes with the law and had even shot to death a federal revenue agent. P. T.

Chapter 2 - The Start of a Career

Ennis defended the shooting by saying that the federal agent had come upon the Ennis home in the dark and not identified himself properly.

On the evening of February 27, 1886, 20 days after the birth of his last child, Charles Haygood was on duty as deputy marshal and walking through the crowds. On Hancock Street, at the southwest corner of its intersection with Wayne Street, he became engaged in conversation with E. N. "Sam" Ennis, a brother of P. T. Ennis. Sam was also a brother of Sheriff C. W. Ennis, Charles' superior. Suddenly, Sam Ennis put the muzzle of a revolver to the chest of Charles Haygood and fired. A few seconds later he fired a second shot into Charles' chest. Charles turned and ran, as a third shot was fired at his back. That shot missed its mark. Charles ran to Case's drugstore on South Wayne Street to seek medical help. There, he collapsed onto the floor. Just before his death Charles said, "Why did he do it? I never harmed him." He died a few minutes later. Charles was a popular citizen and officer. A mob quickly pinned Sam Ennis to a wall. Sheriff C. W. Ennis and other deputies rescued him. Sheriff Ennis turned Sam over to deputies who transported him to the city jail.

There were no witnesses who overheard the conversation between Charles and Sam Ennis. At his preliminary hearing Sam recounted what had transpired. His is the only account of the shooting that includes dialogue between Sam and Charles. Obviously, Sam's testimony was self-serving. Whether it is the truth or not cannot be determined.

Sam claimed that Charles had said to him, "By God if you go where I want you to go, it will be the end of you." The claim was that Charles had his hand in his pocket, on his pistol, and was attempting to pull the pistol out. Sam alleged that he was fearful that his life was in danger and that in self-defense he pulled his own pistol and shot Charles.⁴⁰

The Coroner's jury bound Sam Ennis over for trial. To the astonishment of most observers, Sam was acquitted after a jury deliberation of only fifteen minutes.

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The funeral for Charles Haygood took place at his residence. The attendance was "very large." He was buried at Memory Hill Cemetery with full military honors by the Baldwin Blues, who fired a volley over his grave. Charles was also a member of the Royal Arcanum lodge whose members were pallbearers.⁴¹ Charles is believed to be the first Milledgeville police officer to be slain in the line of duty.

Doubtless Dixie heard the gunshots that killed Charles as her home was only a quarter mile from the scene of the shooting. There is no record of Dixie's feelings in the immediate aftermath of his death.

The three children and Dixie lived for awhile with Dixie's mother. Dixie's father had passed away in 1885, and both women were widows. One immediate problem was how to exist without Charles' paycheck. The Royal Arcanum lodge at least partially came to the rescue with a check for \$3000 presented to Dixie by the Treasurer, Mr. Yoel Joel. With this life insurance that Charles had purchased through the Royal Arcanum lodge, Dixie now had some financial security.⁴²

In May Dixie bought a residential rental property located at 420 South Jefferson Street and had another built at 165 North Wayne Street. She would keep these properties throughout her life, and they would play an interesting part in her story after her death.⁴³

It did not take long for money to get tight, for in the summer of 1887 a levy was placed on the North Wayne Street house to satisfy a debt in favor of one E. H. Wall.⁴⁴ Clearly, Dixie had to contend with the problem of how to earn a living and make ends meet. It was not long before she decided that she would go out into the world and exhibit her mysterious power as Lulu Hurst had done.

²⁶ 1870 Federal Census for Baldwin County, Georgia, p. 213.

²⁷ Hugh Harrington, (ed.), *Methodist Church Record Book, Milledgeville, Georgia, 1811-1876*, Milledgeville, GA., Boyd Publishing Company, 1997, p. 154, 209.

²⁸ 1880 Waco, TX Census; *Southern Recorder*, 19 November 1878.

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- ²⁹ McLennan County, TX, Oakwood Cemetery, Oakwood Avenue, Waco, TX. Block 3.
- ³⁰ *Union Recorder*, 25 May 1880; Death Certificate, Maud [Haygood] Eisenback, Simms, MT., 6 February 1956; *Union Recorder*, 9 November 1880.
- ³¹ 310 East Hancock Street.
- ³² *Union Recorder*, 17 February 1885.
- ³³ Parts of this stage introduction were extracted and modified from “The Magnetic Girl Act” by Magical Ovette in Barry H. Wiley’s *The Georgia Wonder: Lulu Hurst and the Secret That Shook America*, Seattle, Washington: Hermetic Press, Inc., 2004, pp. 328-329.
- ³⁴ “Miss Lulu Hurst Discounted,” *Union Recorder*, 3 March 1885.
- ³⁵ “Electric Girls,” *Union Recorder*, 17 March 1885.
- ³⁶ “Mrs. Dixie Haygood, Her Appearance at the Academy of Music,” *Macon Telegraph & Messenger*, 21 March 1885.
- ³⁷ “Mrs. Dixie Haygood, Her Appearance at the Academy of Music,” *Macon Telegraph & Messenger*, 21 March 1885.
- ³⁸ *Macon Telegraph & Messenger*, 21 March 1885.
- ³⁹ *Macon Telegraph & Messenger*, 21 March 1885.
- ⁴⁰ Details of the shooting can be found in numerous newspaper articles including: “The Killing of Mr. Haygood, How a Prohibitionist was Shot Down by Sam Ennis.” *New York Times*, 3 May 1886; “The Baldwin Tragedy, The Killing of Haygood Declared to be Murder.” *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 March 1886; “Milledgeville ‘s Tragedy, Deputy Marshal Haygood Shot Down by Sam Ennis.” *Macon Telegraph*, 1 March 1886; Coroner’s Jury witness statements and statement of defendant E. N. “Sam” Ennis, 6 March 1886.
- ⁴¹ “Funeral of C. N. Haygood,” *Union Recorder*, 2 March 1886.
- ⁴² *Union Recorder*, 27 April 1886.
- ⁴³ *Union Recorder*, 7 June 1886; Baldwin County Deeds.
- ⁴⁴ *Union Recorder*, 25 October 1887.

Chapter 3 - The Rocky Start of Dixie Haygood's First Tour

In January 1888, with her youngest child almost two years old, it was time to renew her attempt at giving exhibitions of her power, this time without Charles. Her efforts were in deadly earnest, as Dixie would now have to depend upon her own wits to support her family.

Lulu Hurst had retired abruptly after some exhibitions went poorly and was now living in Chattanooga, Tennessee, after making thousands of dollars as the "Georgia Wonder." The field was clear for Dixie to embark on her new venture with the hope of a career as lucrative as Hurst's. Dixie formed a partnership, The Haygood Combination Company, with Macon photographer Mr. T. B. Blackshear and Professor C. D. Mallette as managers.

Their first review was positive:

*A large and appreciative audience assembled in the parlors of the Hotel Lanier this evening to witness the marvelous unexplained power that is possessed by Mrs. Dixie Haygood. The feats were mostly new, combined with those performed by Lula Hurst. A company has been formed, being composed of Professor C. D. Mallette and T. B. Blackshear as managers, with the able assistance of Mrs. Haygood. They will render programmes vocal and instrumental and also the wonderful feats as performed by the Georgia Wonder. The company will visit Columbia, Jacksonville and several other large cities, and then will go to Australia.*⁴⁵

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**Dixie Haygood keeping the pole from being lowered.
(Courtesy of Constance Bohannon)**

Professor Mallette was a singer, but it is unclear whether Dixie and Blackshear performed any vocal or instrumental portions. Dixie did know how to play a piano and may have participated.

Her performances at the Opera House in Milledgeville, as well as in Macon and Hawkinsville, attracted favorable press. The *Atlanta Constitution* of February 19, 1888 reported,

Mrs. Dixie Haygood entertained a number of ladies and gentlemen with an exhibition of her wonderful powers, in

the assembly room of the Young Men's Christian association last evening. The experiments were greatly enjoyed by those present, and all were convinced that she has some strange and unexplainable power, and also that she is something of a mind reader.

One of the greatest feats that she has ever performed was the lifting of several very large men, whose combined weight amounted to eleven hundred and sixty-five pounds, and this was done by the palms of her hands being placed against the arms of the chair. Mrs. Haygood leaves for Savannah tonight under the management of Mr. T.

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*B. Blackshear, where she has an engagement to give six exhibitions next week.*⁴⁶

A performance at Savannah was well covered by the *Savannah Morning News*, which wrote,

*Miss Haygood only needs a little more of that training which a few months on the stage will give, to make her a great attraction. She has a very pleasant, quiet voice that is apt to throw those who are assisting her in her wonderful feats off their guard and one might say, off their feet. "The animated chair," and "The billiard cue" and "chair lifting" quite bewildered those who proposed to help Miss Haygood not to do it. But the crowning triumph over those who doubted her powers was the "lifting experiment." Three or four well-known gentlemen stepped upon the stage by request to take part in the experiment, but before it was concluded a half-dozen volunteers tried their strength. The experiments consisted in one gentleman trying to raise the lady by the elbows and forearm, and then two trying the same thing. To show that there were no weights or other things to assist her she allowed herself to be lifted at first, but when the attempt was repeated it was found impossible to move her. Apparently she weighed several tons. The "unruly umbrella" threw one gentleman over a chair and came very near to pushing another off the stage. Miss Haygood gives another entertainment tonight and it will be well worth seeing.*⁴⁷

Of this time her son, Charlie, with the help of Dixie would later write in a newspaper article,

She was full of magnetism and could do so many things of a mysterious character that people

Chapter 3 - The Rocky Start of Dixie Haygood's First Tour

came for miles to see her, and the colored people of Milledgeville were afraid to pass her on the street. They said she was a "hoodoo."

*Before and after her marriage she gave public exhibitions of her power in some towns down South, the first time being in Jacksonville, Fla. After my father's death, when she was left to make a living for my older brother and sister and myself, there was nothing for her to do but go on the stage.*⁴⁸

Apparently all was going well with the performances as the Company toured through the South. However, off stage there was drama brewing. By early May Dixie would become embroiled in the first of several ill-fated marriages that would dramatically affect her career. The bizarre twists and turns of this marriage, to T. L. Embry, are a prelude to her marriages in the future.

The newspapers did not miss an opportunity to tell such a good, and unusual, story. At first the information was sketchy. "Mr. T. B. Blackshear has returned home after his tour with Mrs. Haygood, the electric woman. She having married Mr. Embry, he closed his contract and came home, and will now devote his whole time to photography, in which he has been so successful."⁴⁹ The following week it was reported that there was quite a mystery surrounding the recent marriage of Mr. T. L. Embry, who was formerly a clerk at the Artesian Hotel in Albany, Georgia. Although it was announced that he married Mrs. Dixie Haygood at Memphis, Embry wrote to a friend in Albany asking him to deny the report. Meanwhile the papers reiterated that the marriage to Dixie did occur, and that Dixie's managers, Mr. T. B. Blackshear and Mr. Josey, insisted that the marriage took place, being performed by a justice of the peace at a place where they stopped.⁵⁰

Despite Blackshear's departure Dixie maintained that she was going to continue her performances. She announced that she had been married to Mr. Embry in Memphis. In response

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to a report that they were not married she stated, "It is all a lie, and I can't see how such a report started."⁵¹

All was not happiness, however. By the middle of May the couple was separated. The *Augusta Chronicle* reported,

*There is a good deal of pathos in the story of the marriage and separation of Dixie Haygood, Georgia's new electric woman, and T. L. Embry, an actor, in Memphis. Embry wrote that the report was false. This called forth a letter from Mrs. Haygood, in which she soundly berates Embry. She says she married him in Memphis before a number of witnesses, and asserts that it is only too sadly true for her; that Embry plied every art known to a real lover and earnest wooer and followed her from city to city before she consented to become his wife. She writes that though she loved "the boy," yet she mistrusted the sincerity of his protestations of love and reminded him that the obligations imposed by marriage were binding until death. The importune manner in which he feigned love overcame her scruples, and she married him as stated. The honeymoon was short and love's young dream was dispelled by Embry deserting his wife of a few days in Atlanta, taking with him all her money, leaving her 'destitute and wretched, indeed.' She says she also received a letter from another woman who claimed to be Embry's lawful wife. She expresses her determination to have Embry arrested and prosecuted for bigamy.*⁵²

The *Atlanta Constitution* saw the marital exploits of the pair as comedy, with the headline "Frisky Dixie Haygood, Her Matrimonial Stew With T. L. Embry, Their First Meeting in Albany and How the Young Hotel Clerk Was Charmed by the Electrical Wonder." The article, reprinted from the *Savannah*

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Morning News, gives some tantalizing insights into the early days of Dixie Haygood's career:

Mrs. Dixie Haygood, the Georgia electrical wonder, seems to be getting her share of newspaper notoriety. Not content with one husband, she is said to have a matrimonial alliance since she went on the stage. She says that T. L. Embry, a young Albany, Ga., hotel clerk, married her at Memphis, Tenn. Embry and his friends, however, deny this.

Mrs. Dixie Haygood was in Savannah during the Jasper festival week, and gave two entertainments at Odd Fellows hall, which were indifferently attended, and the third night's performance, owing to the number of empty benches, was abandoned altogether.

Prof. Mallette, of this city [Savannah], was one of the discoverers of the Georgia wonder, and talked very entertainingly to a Morning News reporter yesterday about his experience with the Dixie Haygood Company. The professor said that in January last he was at Macon, and was rehearsing and drilling an amateur opera company, but that Thomas B. Blackshear, a photographer of Macon, who had heard of Dixie Haygood, set his wits to work to disorganize the opera company, so that he could put Dixie on the road, with Prof. Mallette as advance agent, stage manager and for vocal parts at the different entertainments. As a result, the prima donna of the amateur opera company declined to sing, and then another of the vocalists dropped out. Prof. Mallette said that Blackshear denied that he had anything to do with it, and then mentioned Dixie

Haygood as a drawing card, and with whom some money might be made.

Dixie Haygood had given some public exhibitions, in an amateur way, of her electrical powers, at her home in Milledgeville, and her unexplainable feats of strength were nine day wonders. Professor Mallette said that her husband was an ardent anti-prohibitionist, and in a shooting affray growing out of the prohibition fight up there, he was shot and killed. He had some insurance on his life, and left a wife and two or three children. Monies were provided for the latter, and Dixie Haygood's first debut upon the stage under the Blackshear-Mallette management, was at Milledgeville, and was a financial failure.

From Professor Mallette's statement the lady was in bad humor the first night, forming a dislike for her stage manager, which culminated at Savannah by his withdrawal from the company. It appears that the professor was encored, and when he came forward to sing a second time there was no pianist. Dixie had the pianist behind the arras [curtain] scolding him for having repeated some gossip picked up in Milledgeville which the electrical wonder was very much out of humor about, and when the professor called the pianist to account for the discourtesy the fair Dixie took it as a personal affront. The professor, however, thought no more about it, and came south, fixing dates at Savannah for the week before the Jasper festival, and from here he went to Brunswick, Waycross, Valdosta, Thomasville, Albany and Americus. Meantime Dixie must have wanted to take in the Jasper festival, or imagined she would

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draw better that week, and Blackshear cancelled the Brunswick date and changed the Savannah dates to February 22, 23, and 24.

Professor Mallette came back to Savannah and on the first night came forward, sang, was encored, as he always is, reappeared, and after another vocal rendition brought Dixie Haygood on the stage and introduced her. She was in a pet, and between the acts declared she would not carry out the programme. Professor Mallette said that he insisted that she must keep faith with the public, and she complied, but with poor grace, and while she did carry out the programme, she did it in a spiritless way. The next day the professor said he received the following note, which was sent to him at the Screven house:

"Savannah, Ga. February 23, 1888 – Professor Mallette I shall not appear on the stage with you again, or have anything to do with you after tonight. Dixie Haygood"⁵³

The professor said that he could not account for her strange action, except that he had insisted she should keep faith with the public. He appeared the following night as before, sang, and introduced what he described as "the pouting beauty," who did no better that night than the previous one. Then, he said, while she was going through her part of the program, he circulated among his old friends in Savannah, who were among the audience. This distraction seemed to add fuel to the fire, for Blackshear hunted Mallette up the next day and told him that Dixie vowed that she would not go on the stage at all the next night if Mallette even entered the hall.

As a result, the company fell apart and Blackshear hurried back to Macon. The company left Mallette on his own, and he went on to fill the Waycross, Valdosta, Thomasville, Americus and Albany dates, which he claimed were financially

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successful. Mallette claimed that he was to receive one third of the profits, and he never received a cent, but received a dun from Blackshear for \$58.38 for costume and cash expended in arranging the advance dates.⁵⁴

In addition to the breakup of the Haygood Combination Company, the newspaper continued to follow the Embry story and described Mallette's loss of faith in Dixie:

Returning to Dixie Haygood, it was on the trip in question where she formed the acquaintance of T. L. Embry. Embry was the youthful, blue-eyed and popular clerk of the Artesian house at Albany, and he fell a victim to the electrical glances of the electrical wonder.

When Dixie left Albany, Embry, who was an embryonic lover, so to speak, resigned his position and blindly followed the magnet on her western trip to Atlanta, where he tired of her. According to her statement she says they were married at Memphis and he deserted her at Atlanta, taking all her money and leaving her destitute. She wrote a letter to a gentleman in Albany, the Albany News and Advertiser says, in which she said that she has received a letter from a woman claiming to be the wife of Embry, and adds that she intends to have her faithless husband arrested and prosecuted for bigamy and theft.

Professor Mallette, in commenting upon the denial Embry makes of his marriage, says that while ordinarily he would have no reason to doubt the statement of a woman claiming to be married, yet in this instance, if Mr. Embry denies it, he prefers to believe Mr. Embry.⁵⁵

Mallette claimed that Mr. Blackshear's venture proved to be a poor investment, for Blackshear wrote to him: "I am out of pocket \$1500. We failed to get up any enthusiasm on our last

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trip west.” Dixie’s first venture on the road was obviously a disaster.

The strange saga of the marriage of Dixie Haygood and T. L. Embry had a few more twists before fading away. The *Macon Telegraph* reported that

*Mrs. Embry left yesterday for Kentucky. She has received information that her husband, T. L. Embry, is dead, and letters conveying expressions of condolence somewhat corroborate the news. These letters are from relatives of Embry, and with their sympathy give the pleasing information that Mrs. Embry is heir to several thousand dollars. She has gone to Richmond, Kentucky, to see the relatives of the deceased husband, and remove any doubts that may exist.*⁵⁶

The *Atlanta Constitution* smugly reported that “the readers of the *News and Advertiser* will remember that we intimated our doubts as to the truth of the report that T. L. Embry, the former clerk of the Artesian house of this city, who trifled with the electrical wonder, Mrs. Dixie Haygood, was dead. Our suspicions are fully confirmed; a gentleman of this city received a letter from T. L. Embry, dated at Salt Lake City, July 20, 1888.” The *Constitution* commented tongue in cheek that “Embry may by this time have become a Mormon elder and fully compensated for the loss of the fair charmer he left behind.”⁵⁷

The T. L. Embry sideshow began to wind down as a report indicated that “the electric wonder, Mrs. Dixie Haygood Embry, will sue for a divorce from her truant husband, T. L. Embry, who is now in San Francisco. She expects to go on the stage again at a near date and proposes taking a tour to the west.”⁵⁸

The Union Recorder, while writing that Dixie was in Macon, quoted a *Columbus Enquirer* reporter as saying that “she would leave her children at Macon and start for a tour through the North.” She also told the reporter that “her boys

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did not manifest her electric power, but that her girl, eight years old, 'does exactly as I did when I was her age.'"⁵⁹

The following week Dixie was in Milledgeville before she embarked on her new tour.⁶⁰ On September 12, 1888, as "Mrs. Dixie Haygood-Embry" she gave her property on North Wayne Street in Milledgeville in trust to her three children. Mrs. E. H. Jarratt, Dixie's mother, was the trustee.⁶¹

The Embry marriage ended in divorce. The petition for divorce was filed September 26, 1888. It provides clues to the details, from Dixie's perspective at least, of the marriage as well as a glimpse into life on the road. The marriage took place on April 24th in Tennessee. The following day Embry left Dixie and went to Little Rock, Arkansas. From there he telegraphed Dixie and asked her to send him \$150.

She did not understand this rather premature draft on the treasury so soon after the vows had been said, and thinking perhaps her husband was in trouble and distress, and believing that it was her duty as a wife, she went to where he was instead of honoring the draft. On meeting him at that place he immediately carried her to Cincinnati and there registered as L. L. Embry of Lowell, Massachusetts, and registered her as Mrs. Dixie Haygood of some place, the name of which was strange to her, but she did not discover this fact until afterward, when the register was consulted. While at the hotel in Cincinnati Mr. Embry was fearful his wife would lose her money, and volunteered his services as the treasurer of the family. Mrs. Embry, reposing that confidence in him which all good wives repose in their husbands, gave into his keeping the sum of \$380, all the money she had, and then without even a parting kiss, he skipped out, leaving his wife penniless in a strange land to care for herself the best she could,

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*and from that day to this her eyes have never beheld him. She says in the petition that Mr. Embry afterward procured letters to be written stating that he was dead, but on investigation she has learned that he is yet in the land of the living, and the last she heard of him he was in the state of Mississippi. And all of which cruel treatment and fraudulent acts the said Embry did without the least provocation. She therefore asks for a divorce and that she resume the name of Mrs. Dixie Haygood.*⁶²

Thus ended the first in a long line of rocky marriages or partnerships (see Appendix B). The relationship with Embry was most certainly a disaster, and it affected Dixie's first serious attempt at an entertainment company. Both her attempt at a marriage and the Haygood Combination Company were failures.

⁴⁵ "An Eye on Australia, Mrs. Dixie Haygood to make a Theatrical Venture," *Atlanta Constitution*, 31 January 1888. Note that Lulu Hurst's given name of Lula was used. Lula was her stage name.

⁴⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, 19 February 1888.

⁴⁷ "An Interesting Performance, Miss Dixie Haygood's Remarkable Feats," *The Morning News* [Savannah], 28 February 1888.

⁴⁸ *The Washington Star*, "The Star's New 'Devil', A Bright Youth Who Has Girdled the Globe," 13 December 1900. While bearing Charles Haygood's name as author the article was undoubtedly written by his mother as he was too young to remember the events related in the article. This article will hereinafter be referred to as "Charlie's Story, *Washington Star*."

⁴⁹ *Union Recorder*, 8 May 1888.

⁵⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, 14 May 1888, p. 2, col. 1.

⁵¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 May 1888, p. 11.

⁵² *Augusta Chronicle*, 23 May 1888, p. 3, col. 1.

⁵³ *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 May 1888, p. 2, col. 3.

⁵⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 May 1888, p. 2, col. 3.

⁵⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, 28 May 1888, p. 2, col. 3.

⁵⁶ "Mrs. Dixie Haygood-Embry," *Macon Telegraph*, 1 June 1888.

⁵⁷ "Sidewalk Echoes," *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 August 1888, p. 2, col. 3.

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⁵⁸ "Sidewalk Echoes," *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 September 1888, p. 2.

⁵⁹ "Editorial Glimpses and Clippings," *Union-Recorder*, 11 September 1888.

⁶⁰ *Union Recorder*, 18 September 1888.

⁶¹ Deed, Baldwin County Courthouse.

⁶² "Wants a Divorce, Mrs. Dixie Haygood Files Her Petition - The Story of the Suit," *Macon Telegraph*, 27 September 1888.

Chapter 4 - The Origin of Annie Abbott

In late 1888 or early 1889, Dixie met Richard N. Abbey. Richard had a residence in Atlanta and worked for Western Union Telegraph. Richard became not only her manager but also her third husband about 1889. It is very unfortunate that the circumstances of their meeting and marriage are unknown as Richard would play an important part, for good and for ill, for the remainder of Dixie's life. Richard was a dapper and handsome man: 5' 10" tall, blue eyes and brown hair with a smart looking moustache. Richard Newland (sometimes misspelled as Newton) Abbey was born Sept. 21st, 1852, in Van Buren, Arkansas.⁶³ He was married to Fannie Dora Snowden in 1872 and had four children, the last one born in 1888 in Atlanta.⁶⁴

At this time Dixie's stage name changed from Dixie Haygood to Annie Abbott. After a time Dixie adopted that name as her own in both public and private life. From here on we will refer to her as Annie Abbott.

Annie Abbott was 27 and Richard was about 36 when they became partners and took the Annie Abbott act on the road. Her skills and ability seemed to expand within this partnership, and a number of exhibitions were added to the act. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* of July 23, 1889 reprinted an article from the *Baltimore American*, as follows:

*A Georgia Woman who has Remarkable
Strength Now in Baltimore.*

Georgia has produced another lady who is as full of electricity or something very like it as the wonderful Lulu Hurst, of the same State, who used to throw big men around without much trouble. This lady, who gave a private exhibition last night at Ford's to a few spectators, is Mrs. Annie Abbott,

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

of Milledgeville, a petite body of only 98 pounds. She is a blonde of 20 years and of pleasing appearance. When seven years of age she went up to her father's chair one day and astonished him by saying she could lift him up. He laughed at the childish remark, but she put her hands on the chair and it came up from the floor. From that day it was apparent that she had more than muscular power.

She showed her peculiar power in her own State at charitable entertainments, but never thought of appearing in public until last February, when she was traveling in Florida with her husband for her health, when the managers of the sub-tropical exhibition at Jacksonville prevailed upon her to show what she could do. Since that time she has appeared several times in public in Georgia and South Carolina, and will do so again tomorrow evening and the remaining evenings of the week at Ford's. Last night there were half a dozen or so pretty heavy and strong men on the stage, but she was more than a match for any or all. A man sat in an ordinary chair, leaped back on its rear legs, and when Mrs. Abbott simply put her hands under his ears the chair and man jumped up about three inches.

Five men were then piled upon the chair – the heaviest 215 pounds and all the others over 160 – and when she laid her hands on the big man's ears the chair jumped up again. She stood on one foot and let a billiard cue rest in her hands without grasping it, and one, two and three men could not push her over. The combined weight of the three

men exerting all their muscular power was over 400 pounds. She pushed them all about the stage.



Annie Abbott holding back three men.⁶⁵

Heavy men sat in a rocking chair and with her fingers just touching the back they could not rock. The 215 pounder and others put their hands under her elbows and tried with might and main to lift the 98 pounds, but in vain. In none of the trials could the men do anything with her.

Several years ago she was at the Hot Springs, in Arkansas, where she was matched against John L. Sullivan, but the brute slugger could do nothing

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

*with her. When she has her hands on the chair, or on any wooden substance, she waits about a minute and suddenly the power comes but the muscles do not become rigid. She says the feats never tire her, but just before a trial she feels nervous and weary. She sleeps well after throwing strong people about. She must stand on wood and operate with wooden chairs and sticks. When in contact with carpets and iron she can do nothing. Recently, when exhibiting in the South, somebody connected a wire with her body and grounded it, and immediately she was powerless. When one pushes against her the impression is that of the resistance of a wall. She looks quite delicate. She is a quiet lady and very modest.*⁶⁶

On January 14, 1890 the *Union Recorder* reported, "Mrs. Dixie Abbott, the Little Georgia Electric Wonder ... gave an exhibition in Saratoga on the 1st. Her wonderful feats of strength attract large audiences and puzzle all beholders. We trust our strangely gifted little towns-woman may reap a golden harvest from her northern tour."⁶⁷ Two weeks later she was in Milledgeville visiting her mother.⁶⁸

Several times during her career Annie Abbott allowed herself to be examined not only by members of the committee who appeared on the stage during her performances but also by physicians. When a man of science examined her and could not detect any form of fraud it was the sort of good publicity that far exceeded anything that could have been purchased. Such reports added to her aura of mystery and the legend that she possessed unusual or supernatural powers.

One such physician who examined her was Dr. Lewis G. Pedigo, M.D. of Roanoke, Virginia. Dr. Pedigo was a fellow of the Medical Society of Virginia, a fellow of the American Medical Association and an associate member of the American Branch of the Society for Psychical Research. He also had done considerable research into hypnotism.

Chapter 4 - The Origin of Annie Abbott

Dr. Pedigo was interviewed in conjunction with Annie Abbott's performances at Roanoke and Lynchburg. He was asked if any trick or deception was used in Annie Abbott's performances. He replied, "Most emphatically no! The masses of the people are so accustomed to legerdemain in these public exhibitions that they naturally look out for something of this kind." He went on to say that the power that Annie Abbott exhibited "is not electricity; it is not magnetism, it is not hypnotic suggestion; it is not will power." When pressed by the reporter Dr. Pedigo said that his full report is not ready for publication but that the explanation for Annie Abbott's power "is only one of the manifestations of what we call subconscious nerve power, and belongs to the same general group of phenomena with hypnotism and suggestion but by the present definitions is neither the one or the other."⁶⁹ He went on to promise that his forthcoming report would in all probability upset some prevailing theories on the subject.

Annie Abbott and Richard Abbey must have been overjoyed after reading the newspaper article. They could not have asked for more. Undoubtedly, Annie Abbott sent the clipping to the *Union Recorder* so her friends in Milledgeville could read of her success. It is interesting to note that the *Union Recorder* printed the Dr. Pedigo article on April 1, 1890, April Fool's Day.

Later in the year Dr. Pedigo published the pamphlet, *The Subconscious Realm, a Physiological Study of Mrs. Abbott, "The Georgia Wonder."* In this 26 page pamphlet Dr. Pedigo explains, at length, his theory as to where Annie Abbott got her power. He suggested that "we have, in this power of Mrs. Abbott's, not a new force, but a rather unfamiliar manifestation of an old one – viz: nerve force."

After watching her performances at Roanoke, Virginia, Dr. Pedigo asked Annie Abbott if she would consent to allowing him to hypnotize her in order that he could test some of his theories. She said that she had been hypnotized once before but did not say where that was. Being hypnotized was risky business as she could not have known precisely what he

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"



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**Dixie Haygood / Annie Abbott hypnotized by Pedigo.
(Photo from Dixie Haygood's photo album)**

intended and she could not be certain that she would not unintentionally expose her power as mere trickery. She “entered into the experiments with an enthusiasm which was helpful...” wrote Dr. Pedigo.

The “first séance was held in a private parlor secured at a hotel for the purpose, and was witnessed by five prominent citizens of the town, who were invited according to the customs of the Society [for Psychical Research].” Dr. Pedigo described the hypnotism in some detail.

Mrs. Abbott was hypnotized by having her gaze at a silver dollar placed in her open hand while slow, rhythmical motions or “passes” were made with the hands over her head and face. Our subject very soon showed the effects. The first symptom occurred before there were any indications of decided sleepiness. She said very suddenly “Where is the dollar? You have taken it away and put it in your pocket. I saw you do it.”

The coin was still in her hand in plain view. Dr. Pedigo asked her to search for the dollar which Annie Abbott did. The coin eventually fell to the floor. The sound “roused her from the illusion.”

The next test was of great interest to Dr. Pedigo:

The subject and operator stood on a wooden surface, facing each other, with the palms of their hands in contact. Thus the circuit for this force was complete, and the usual thrill or vibration so frequently noted by her assistants on the stage, was distinctly perceived. The subject was directed to gaze steadily at a bright object suspended to the watch chain of the operator. The purpose in the special arrangement of this experiment was to test the question whether the force, which enabled Mrs. Abbott to accomplish such marvelous things, would help to develop the subconscious state.

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

There was no mistaking the result. She drifted rapidly into the hypnotic trance and fell backward into a rocking chair which was placed just behind her. Her eyes were still wide open but had a peculiar, expressionless stare. A few suggestions sufficed to close them, and she was soundly asleep. When she was aroused (by suggestion) it was a curious and rather significant fact that she did not remember standing at all, but contended that she had been sitting in the chair during the entire experiment. This lapse of memory proves that this faculty was suspended in a very early stage, and tends to prove that the force of which we availed ourselves in this séance either produces kindred subconscious phenomena, or is part and parcel of that condition.

Next Dr. Pedigo experimented with post-hypnotic suggestion. Hypnotic suggestion worked on remembering her name but not on her power. He thought that if Annie Abbott's power was the result of suggestion then he could control her power under hypnosis. He put Annie Abbott to sleep again and "addressed her in distinct, positive tones, 'Now Mrs. Abbott, when you are awakened you will find that with reference to me, this force of yours is gone. You will find that you cannot move me or unbalance me by the use of that chair.'" But he found that Annie Abbott's power was not diminished when she was awakened. In fact, he thought that her power might actually have become stronger, perhaps by the "subconscious habit" that had been developed.

The experiment with post-hypnotic suggestion was tried again only this time, as a control, Annie Abbott was told that "when you are awake you will have forgotten your own name." When she was awakened Dr. Pedigo tried to resist her when holding a chair and was "snatched across the floor." Clearly, Annie Abbott had again not lost her power. But then he asked her, "Madame, will you kindly give me your full name?" She

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replied, "Certainly, my name is Mrs. ...ah... Mrs. Haygood." When asked how many times she had been married she replied, "only once." He then asked if her husband was with her and she replied "No sir, my husband is dead." Dr. Pedigo asked what her maiden name was and she "reflected a few moments, with evident and increasing embarrassment, laughed rather nervously, confessed that she felt very silly not to remember it, and finally gave it up." He then asked her if she ever heard of a man named Abbott. She replied that she had not. She also had not heard of a Mrs. Abbott, of Georgia.

Dr. Pedigo was delighted as he saw progress had been made. He wrote that she was traveling with her husband Mr. Abbott and had been married twice, and that her first husband's name was Haygood. Dr. Pedigo recognized that Annie Abbott had been taken "back to the period of her widowhood. Of course she was again put to sleep, and this lapse of memory in all its relations and with all its dangerous and unpleasant possibilities, was corrected by counter suggestion." Dr. Pedigo wrote "I am justified in concluding that this force is ordinarily beyond or beneath the direct reach of suggestion, and that it is certainly not the product of suggestion acting upon those who antagonize and resist the operator."

Pleased and confident, Dr. Pedigo continued. He understood that Annie Abbott's force did not work "when either Mrs. Abbott or the person cooperating with her stands on a woolen carpet, or on thick rubber or on an iron surface, or on glass, or on the ground. It is also true that wood is the best, and in fact, the only medium thus far discovered through which to exert the force. The two persons must stand on a wooden floor."

He hypnotized Annie Abbott "to the profound stage" and made the following suggestion: "While you are asleep I have a force of upholsterers at work in the room. They are taking up the carpet. When you shall have finished your sleep you will find that the carpet is gone and the bare floor remains. Now wake up."

"Do you see any changes in the room?"

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"No."

"Look at the floor; any changes there?"

"No sir, I see nothing but a plain floor."

"No carpet?"

"No sir."

"Very well then, we can go on with our experiments."

Pedigo reported that they stood on the carpet which she could not see, and tried the chair test. It failed utterly, in spite of repeated efforts, and the subject was evidently puzzled and distressed and wondered "what is the matter?" He was convinced that she was not practicing any deception. She followed too "closely the laws of an obscure science which she did not understand." Addressing the skeptical reader, Pedigo said, "The one experiment furnishes at least a strong presumption, if it does not actually prove that these affinities are real."⁷⁰

That evening Annie Abbott and Richard must have been pleased at the result of her hypnosis by Dr. Pedigo. Annie Abbott saved pictures of her hypnosis in her photograph album, which still exists. It was a day she wanted to remember.

She along with Richard were definitely meeting great success, not only on stage but in the press.

⁶³ U.S. Passport, Richard N. Abbott, spouse of Annie Abbott, minor child Charlie Abbott, 23 May 1892.

⁶⁴ Cleveland Abbe and Mary Josephine Genung Nichols, *Abbe-Abbey Genealogy*, New Haven, CT: The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1916, p. 217.

⁶⁵ Drawing is from *The Illustrated London News*, Nov. 28, 1891

⁶⁶ "Stronger than Sullivan," *Philadelphia Inquirer* 23 July 1889 – this same article appeared in the Humeston, Iowa *New Era*, 5 May 1890.

⁶⁷ *Union Recorder*, 14 January 1890.

⁶⁸ *Union Recorder*, 21 January 1890.

⁶⁹ *Daily Virginian*, 25 March 1890; "The Georgia Wonder, A Roanoke Physician's Views Respecting Mrs. Abbott's Mysterious Power," *Union Recorder*, 1 April 1890.

⁷⁰ Lewis G. Pedigo, A.M., M.D., *The Subconscious Realm, A Physiological Study of Mrs. Abbott, "The Georgia Wonder,"* Roanoke, Virginia, The Bell Printing and Manufacturing Co., 1890.

Chapter 5 - Going West

Another truly memorable experience took place in California in February 1889. At Stockton Annie Abbott had given her usual exhibition and then moved on to another city. Meanwhile back in Stockton there was much discussion about the validity of Annie Abbott's power. Some thought that she had concealed on her body an electrical device which enabled her to perform her feats of strength. Others thought that she was endowed with the power she claimed to possess. Several wagers of significant amounts of money were made on the question. Annie Abbott was invited to return to Stockton so the matter could be investigated. *The Los Angeles Times* referred to the event as "one of the most exciting contests that has ever occurred here...".⁷¹

Prior to the exhibition on the evening of February 10 Annie Abbott was taken to a dressing room by a committee of ladies who "examined her thoroughly, and reported no sort of appliance." A committee of citizens had her do a variety of tests and "she came out most victoriously, vanquishing the committee."

It was reported that "Doctors took Mrs. Abbott's temperature which was found at the beginning to be 82 degrees and at the close 86 degrees, normal being 98.2 degrees." The wager was decided "after a committee of ladies as per agreement had put Annie Abbott through a thorough bath and redressed her in clothing furnished by the committee, after which she performed all her feats."⁷²

Annie Abbott's performances in California continued to receive much attention from the newspapers. However, her desire to not perform on Sundays came to the fore, when it was reported that she had been performing for several weeks at the Orpheum in San Francisco but was now the recipient of a

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

\$2000 suit for breach of contract from the manager there, who alleged she was unwilling to appear on Sundays. She, in turn, was suing the manager for \$200, her last week's unpaid salary.⁷³

The Annie Abbott exhibitions were gaining in popularity. They were bringing in larger and larger crowds and getting more and more publicity. Lengthy articles appeared in well-established newspapers. Annie and Richard were enjoying the first real success after years of struggling.

When she appeared in Los Angeles it was reported that she "left those present very much mystified as to the secret of her power. Certainly the force she exerted was not muscular, for in every case instead of grasping any object as did those who pitted their power against her, she simply laid her hand upon it."⁷⁴

The really good news for Annie Abbott and Richard was that the paper also stated, "Whatever doubts anyone had of the genuineness of Miss Abbott's powers must have been convinced after watching her..." and ended the article with, "No one went away feeling that the show was a fake."⁷⁵ This increasing public acceptance of her mysterious power must have given her and Richard great satisfaction.

One evening she gave a performance to a large audience "who watched her exercise her peculiar force with the closest attention." Among the committee on the stage were several doctors and the district attorney. Annie Abbott performed the same tests as the previous evening "with equal success, and while it was undisputed that the little lady is possessed of remarkable power of some kind, no one pretended to explain just what it is." Many theories were advanced, however.

The committeeman, Dr. Conger, said that Annie Abbott has "the same kind of force that Samson possessed, that has cropped out occasionally in men and women during the succeeding centuries." Another committeeman said that "when he grasped the billiard cue he felt a current as of electricity pass through him, which made him sick at his stomach and deprived him of all strength."⁷⁶

The district attorney thought that the power was due to electricity. Each committeeman had his own theory but none of them suggested any cause that might be construed as fraud or trickery of any kind. The newspaper commented that "Mrs. Abbott is a remarkable woman, this was shown, if by nothing else, by her temperature and pulse beats, which varied widely from the normal average of ordinary individuals."⁷⁷

The same day, in another article, the *Los Angeles Times* commented:

*Nine-tenths of the people who have read the press notices of the performances of Annie Abbott undoubtedly made up their minds that the exhibition was a fake, like so many others that travel over the country. The test which was made yesterday by well-known citizens of Los Angeles, conclusively proves that this was not the case. Her power is as remarkable as it is incomprehensible. The fact that this superhuman power is largely increased when Miss Abbott is standing upon an insulated platform, and is absent when she is upon the naked earth, would seem to show that electricity or animal magnetism in some form is at the bottom of it. It is certainly an interesting case for the scientists.*⁷⁸

Annie Abbott's success soon brought about a dangerous public challenge to her credibility. The manager of the Dime Museum, a Mr. Doyle, announced in the *Times* that the power of Annie Abbott was only a trick. Doyle claimed he would put up a deposit of \$500, to be forfeited if he could not in twenty-four hours teach any woman, to be selected by a committee, to perform any test given by Mrs. Abbott, or in other words to duplicate her performance. He claimed that Mrs. Doyle, without any preparation, performed a number of acts of Mrs. Abbott in the presence of several gentlemen, most of whom had witnessed Mrs. Abbott.⁷⁹

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The question now before Annie Abbott and Richard was how to respond to such a challenge. To accept it, and be exposed if some woman could do the same feats, would be unthinkable. However, to refuse the challenge would also be unthinkable.

Richard, using the name R. N. Abbott, replied to the challenge by personally appearing at the *Times* office early in the morning with \$500 in cash. He also left a contract or agreement requiring a lady, not weighing more than Annie Abbott, to be chosen by a committee. The lady would be asked to join the performance at the Los Angeles Theater on February 28. After Annie Abbott performed one of her tests the lady would have an opportunity to duplicate her feat. If she failed in her efforts she would be declared the loser, Annie Abbott would continue with her usual exhibition, and Mr. Doyle would give \$500 to the Mayor of Los Angeles to be used by a local charity of his choosing.

Annie Abbott and Richard had thrown their hat into the ring and waited for the response from Mr. Doyle. The *Times* reported that "Mr. Doyle was notified that the \$500 deposit of Mr. Abbott was waiting to be covered, but he failed to put in an appearance up to last evening with his coin." Annie Abbott and Richard had called Doyle's bluff and emerged the victors.

Richard, as R. N. Abbott (manager of Annie Abbott), told the *Times* that there is hardly a town or city where the Abbotts perform that they do not hear of someone who knows all about how it is done, and is anxious, as they say, to "explain the trick." He said they never paid any attention to these things, and would not have done so in the present case except for Doyle's claim of having exposed Lulu Hurst. Richard said exposure of Hurst had never been done.⁸⁰ Richard deftly handled the situation, for he, of course, would have known that Lulu Hurst had been exposed, onstage as well as in the newspapers, on several occasions.

The Los Angeles Times, on March 1, 1891, took the unusual step of devoting almost a full page to the scientific theories describing and explaining Annie Abbott's "strange

manifestation of force.” The scientific author, Mr. W. A. Spalding, gave a precise summary of the various components of the exhibition:

First. A committee of ten or more well-known citizens having been selected from the audience, each member, in turn, takes firm hold of a chair and tries to hold it still in mid-air. Mrs. Abbott lays her hands on the wood and moves and tosses the holder about with little apparent effort on her part.

Second. She stands erect on one heel, holding a billiard cue in her hands. Each member of the committee tries, by taking hold of the cue, to push her from her balance. Then they try by twos, threes and fours, without in any instance succeeding.

Third. She lifts the committee singly seated in chairs, by laying her hands against the chair-posts and without grasping them.

Fourth. She holds a billiard cue in her open hands while one or two strong men are unable to push the cue across her hands. In four or more instances the cue has been broken during the experiment.

Fifth. Each member of the committee tries to lift her from the floor, but cannot do so, (grasping her by the bare elbows) after she has summoned her peculiar power to her assistance.

Sixth. She communicates this abnormal ponderability to a boy whose hands lie on hers. She also communicates it through the medium of two silk handkerchiefs, opposite ends being held by herself and the boy.⁸¹

It should be mentioned here that the boy on the stage was quite likely her son Fred. Fred, Charlie and Maud were all

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"



Man lifted on billiard cue by Dixie Haygood.

taken on the road, and performed on the stage, with their mother from time to time.

Seventh. Four men grasp the end of a billiard cue and hold its end down upon the floor, while a fifth, weighing over 200 pounds, is seated above the hands. By placing the tips of her fingers against the cue (holding an egg meanwhile between her hand and the wood), she lifts the cue and sets it down several feet away.

Eighth. Eight men, with an aggregate weight of not less than fifteen hundred pounds, are piled upon two chairs, and, by placing her hands against the chair posts, she lifts the entire lot and throws them over upon the floor.

Ninth. She holds a thin cut-glass tumbler, wrapped in a silk handkerchief, against her chest, and a succession of muffled ticks, about like those from 'snapping' the tumbler with the fingernail, are produced. These sounds are even audible to the audience. These sounds are not synchronous with her pulse.

Tenth. Her temperature during these experiments is from 90-94 degrees, while the normal temperature of the human body is 98.6 degrees. Her temperature being from 4 to 8 degrees below the normal, per pulse is accelerated above the normal, being over one hundred beats to the minute.⁸²

Spalding observed that there were several "peculiar conditions" required for the force to operate "which point more strongly to electrical action than to any other known force." He noted that the force was absent when she stood on the ground or when she and her subject were standing upon a sheet of iron or wet wood. Her force was stronger when she was upon an insulated surface such as a dry board or glass.

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

Spalding described the ticking sound in the tumbler as "remarkably like the snap of an electric spark from a charged Leyden jar or a generator." He had been told that "during a thunderstorm, Mrs. Abbott's teeth are so charged with electricity that each one becomes a magnet and holds a needle in suspension if touched to it." He added that "the lady has been struck by lightning three times, and once a person standing beside her was killed by such a stroke."

Adding further complication to the theory of the power being electricity, Spalding noted that the power can be transmitted to another person "by contact of the hands or through a dry piece of wood or a silk handkerchief." However, "she cannot transmit it through a piece of green wood or iron, both of which are good conductors. This is against the electrical theory."

Spalding, clearly mystified, wrote that enough electricity to create such force "would be sufficient to burn the lady to a cinder." Admitting that he was against a "stone wall" he suggested that "the phenomena cannot be satisfactorily explained by any of the known laws of electricity. We must simply fall back on the great mystery beyond and say that, after all, maybe we don't yet know much about electricity."

After a lengthy discussion of gravity and magnetism Spalding suggested a theory in which

the little lady is a galvanic generator of an abnormal and quite unique kind. That she is different from other people is attested by the fact that her normal temperature is so low. In an ordinary mortal if the temperature sinks to 90 degrees there would be grave fears of his speedy death. And while the temperature ranges so low in Mrs. Abbott, the heart beats are more than normally rapid. The force which Mrs. Abbott's system generates – any more, in fact – may be transmuted into heat, light, electricity or motion. Mrs. Abbott's natural galvanic battery, or the

system of nerves which distribute its current, perverts a portion of force which would naturally go to create heat, and, instead, creates an unknown form of electricity.

The forces that Annie Abbott displayed were considered by Spalding alongside those of the Hindu Fakirs of India, who could perform “extraordinary liftings” and attributed their supernatural powers to the spirits of the dead. He suggested that if she had displayed her power in old Salem she would have been hanged or burned at the stake.⁸³

The exceptional newspaper coverage and scientific reports about Annie Abbott’s powers brought large crowds to the exhibitions. They also brought more scientific inquiry into the nature of her powers. On the morning of March 1, 1891 a group of about a dozen ladies and gentlemen witnessed several private experiments.

In an effort to demonstrate that the power was electric in nature Annie Abbott was asked to hold two metal handles connected to a telephone by wires. It was easy to detect “clicks” when the circuit was opened and closed. But, upon others trying the same experiment, it was found that several of the people present produced the same results. This electrical puzzle was inconclusive and left to be pondered by electricity experts.

The group moved on to other experiments. An eleven-year-old boy was “charged” by Annie Abbott through the use of two silk handkerchiefs. A strong man, standing on the platform of a scale, then attempted to lift the boy. It was discovered that the man lifted the boy’s entire weight, plus twenty pounds, and the boy had still not been raised from the floor. The group was entirely puzzled as to where this extra weight had come from if it had not come from Annie Abbott through the silk handkerchiefs. To add further to the mystery, silk is a non-conductor so the power, whatever it might be, could not be electricity.⁸⁴ The conclusion of the scientific inquiry was that Annie Abbott’s force would doubtless puzzle scientific minds for some time.

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On the evening of March 1st, Richard Abbey, using the name Mr. Abbott, accompanied by some reporters and Professor Charles N. Steen, a great exposé of phony mediums and spiritualists, ventured out in search of a spiritualist gathering where they could have some fun. They found a place bearing the sign, "Spiritualism – Mrs. F. A. Logan – Public circles, harmony, Sunday evening at 7:30. Trance and slate-writing mediums will participate. Admission, 10 cents."

The group sat among the audience. Soon, they heard a whisper go around the room, "Steen is here; look out for him." The "ancient female medium" who was standing ready to give her performance immediately opened her eyes and came out of her trance and began to talk about religion. Mrs. Logan, the woman who ran the establishment, made some excuses for an excellent medium who could not be present. She invited other mediums present to come forward and put on a demonstration. One got up and spoke to a man in the audience, who was not a medium, telling him that during the entire evening a young girl, as a spirit, had been standing next to him with her hand on his shoulder. Might the gentleman recognize her? No, he did not.

With no slate writing and no active medium present, Professor Steen, Mr. Abbott, and the reporters had nothing to debunk. As the crowd began to disperse Steen leaped to the stage and offered up to \$1000 if any medium could produce his mother's name on a slate. None took him up on the offer, saying that such an offer rattled real mediums and then they could not produce the required results. That ended the evening that had started out with such high hopes for amusement.⁸⁵

Two weeks later Annie Abbott gave an exhibition at the court house in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The advance advertising referred to "Annie Abbott, R. N. Abbott, Maud Abbott, Fred Abbott, Charley Abbott, of the Little Georgia Magnet Company."⁸⁶ This is the first time the name, "the Little Georgia Magnet," appeared, and it was to become a name not only recognizable around the world, but a name used by others when performing the Annie Abbott act.

Professor Steen and his wife, who were performing at about the same time in Los Angeles as part of the Steen and Wood Combination and who were well known for their exposure of clairvoyant tricks and spiritualist frauds, joined with Annie Abbott in April to form the Steen-Abbott Novelty Company. The partnership was not to last, however. After the breakup of the company Annie Abbott retained the services of T. H. Christiansen as manager.⁸⁷

Professor Steen and his wife Martha E. Steen went on to perform in yet another act, where they performed “a cyclone of mystery, wonderment and mirth,” and Martha gave exhibitions of silent transmission of thought and mental telegraphy.⁸⁸ The breakup of the Steen-Abbott Novelty Company was friendly, for the Steens would rejoin Richard and Annie Abbott on their European tour shortly thereafter. Professor Steen later exhibited the “Georgia Magnet”-like act at Christchurch, New Zealand in 1892, and in 1893 the Steens toured Australia with their own “Georgia Magnet” act in the form of Miss Rose Howard.⁸⁹

After the great success of Los Angeles, Richard and Annie Abbott had a very different experience in Aberdeen, South Dakota. The performance was a disaster and the newspaper coverage was outright hostile. The *Aberdeen Daily News* carried a headline of “Is She a Fraud?” The article describes a nightmare on the stage.

When the committeemen were being selected, a former city engineer, W. P. Butler, stepped upon the stage and volunteered. Richard refused to accept him although it was widely known that Butler had appeared with the sole intention of doing a “most searching investigation,” something the act had earlier solicited. The committee asked Butler to watch from the audience until the show was over.

The performance consisted of seven of the usual feats to demonstrate Annie Abbott’s powers. This “was less than half of that advertised and given in other cities,” reported the *Aberdeen Daily News*. The committee suggested various alterations in the methods used in some of the tests but these

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

were refused by Richard. One committeeman in particular showed that the tests [the newspaper called them "tricks"] "could only be performed when tried in a certain manner demanded by the manager."

The audience "hissed and called down" the committeeman twice when he attempted to show that the tests were not what they claimed to be. The newspaper added the comment that "the house had evidently come with the intention of swallowing a swindle, and they resented any interference even from a committeeman who had been asked to criticize and investigate." As an example, "the lifting of a man in a chair when the chair rested on its four legs, or when the feet of the man were on the rounds, or when his toes touched the floor at the sides of the chair, was indignantly refused [by Annie Abbott's manager]. The criticism given caused the early closing of the show."

The situation deteriorated further when W. P. Butler got on the stage and "announced his desire to expose the tricks and to do them all, and explain how they were done." This was met by the theater manager's opposition and his lowering of the curtain. Butler stepped in front of the now closed curtain and continued. The manager demanded twenty five dollars for the use of the facilities. The audience was getting "aroused, clamored for fair play and all opposition was hushed and the curtain again raised, while the committee returned to the stage."

Initially, the audience was against Butler. They hissed and shouted so that he had difficulty in making himself heard above the "uproar" in the house. The "loud and frequent" interruptions faded as he continued. Butler went through the performance and "was several times interrupted by Mr. Abbott, the showman, who attempted a defense, but he in turn was hissed and his remarks produced no effect for his good. After Mr. Butler concluded his show he appealed to the house and they by a practically unanimous vote declared the Abbott exhibition a 'fake.'"

After the tumultuous evening the newspaper interviewed Mr. Butler at length, who explained in detail how he believed Annie Abbott performed her feats. He pointed out that the silk handkerchief was used both as an insulator and as a conductor of the force, which are opposite functions, with the result that “attention [was] being skillfully diverted.”

Butler also explained, in great detail, how to do several of the tests Annie Abbott performed. One example was the feat of lifting a chair while a man is seated on it:

The lifting of a man in a chair is simple. She presses the fingers against the sides of the chair and is supposed to raise it by her force. By gently pressing upon the back of the posts with the ball of the thumb the chair rises – apparently lifted. No pressure need be exerted by the fingers, in fact the hand of a third person may be placed between hers and the chair, and no pressure be felt, or an egg may be placed there and not be broken. The thumb which is behind the interposed hand does the business. In doing this certain conditions are absolutely indispensable: first, that the sitter lean back so as to throw the center of gravity exactly over the hind legs of the chair; secondly, that his toes be firmly braced in front of the chair and as near it as possible; and thirdly, that he grasp firmly the hind legs of the chair in order to bind the body down to the seat. If the chair rests on all four legs, if the man's feet are not on the floor, if they are on the floor – but back of the front legs, - or if his grasp on the chair is relaxed or is on the front legs, or his body bent forward, the trick is impossible. The center of gravity is shifted or the mechanical conditions so altered as to render it impossible. The toes are the fulcrum and that cannot be moved. If the force as represented, were real, these

changes would not be material. The following modifications might be suggested and could not reasonably be objected to, were it not a fake, for they retain all the elements of contact and circuit claimed as essential:

Let the sitter lean back as requested and on the floor in front of him place a board resting on two wooden rolling pins, and on the board let him rest his feet. Notice now that the toes, the fulcrum, are not stable; as soon as any pressure is thrown on that point it rolls away, proving conclusively that it is upon that point she throws the whole weight of the body, and that there is no "unknown force" operating to lift it. It lifts itself and is self-supporting.

Again, place the front legs of the chair, or the feet of the sitter on the platform on a pair of scales, and the weight will be shown to be exactly what it could be figured to be, were all the mechanical conditions put into the calculation. Other tests can be made, but to none of these will they consent to give a trial. Done as they do it, any child can do it easily. If several men are heaped upon the chair, it can be done still easier. The more men the easier it can be done. The trick of pushing her off her balance while more complicated, mechanically considered, is only mechanical. If she stands squarely on both feet any child can push her over, or if on one foot or heel with the other in front instead of behind the leg upon which she stands, then she can be easily pushed over. The raised foot must be thrown back and used as a counter-poise to maintain the center of gravity at the proper point. If her force were real she could hold the cue

horizontally and prevent it being pushed up or down, or she could hold it behind her and resist being pressed forward, but these changes alter the mechanical conditions and of course will not be entertained by the manager.

The trick of lifting her from the floor is that upon which they put special value as indicating the operation of her force, but, as in all the other tricks there is a mechanical advantage taken by the lady which renders it impossible to lift her. The trick lies entirely in the position of the body. The elbows are thrown slightly out and back, the shoulder blades are slightly drawn together, the spine elongated to its full extent and the body slightly inclined forward. In this position no man on earth can lift her or any other lady or person who will practice the trick until the proper position is learned. The trick of holding her after the chair on which she stands has been drawn from under her is likewise dependent entirely upon the position of her arms. Her elbows are thrown either forward or backward sufficient to permit of her easily dropping to the floor. Those attempting to hold her up are thrown out of balance, and all power of lifting is lost. She will not submit to a straight, fair, vertical lift but invariably drops out of the vertical line. In lifting her from the floor she will not permit any but one certain hold. If the lifter could put his arms around her, grasping her left wrist with the right hand and her right wrist with the left hand, then she could be easily lifted, for her power of squirming would be killed. All the elements of flesh contact may in this test be preserved, but she will not permit it. So too in holding her up, if the

lifter could have one hand under her arm at the shoulder joint, any two boys in the land could lift her up.

Finally, there is the tumbler trick which is the greatest fake of all, and the easiest to perform. It will be noted that at each performance Mr. Abbott steps out prior to this trick and gets a fan for Mrs. Abbott who thereupon holds it but does not use it. From contact with its handles which have probably been covered with rosin her hands are coated so as to stick to a vibratory surface, such as glass. When the glass is held between both hands note that the axis of one hand is at right angles to the axis of the other and that then by an imperceptible twist in a rotary manner the faint rappings are produced. When a glass is held in a silk handkerchief the sound is still easier to produce by merely pressing the tips of the fingers on the glass and gently drawing them in a succession of pulls. A noteworthy fact is that Mr. Abbott always says that the vibrations of this force (he ought to say farce) are irregular and less rapid than the pulse. This trick may be blocked in any of the following ways. Let the committeemen watch the hands closely and see that she does not move them, or hold them, or have the glass held by a committeeman.

It will thus be seen that there is not a trick she does that cannot be duplicated and be fully explained on physical grounds or in accordance with the simplest laws of mechanics. Novices cannot be so proficient as a professional expert so that skeptics must allow much for lack of proficiency. But to assume that the supernatural operates in cases where the simplest laws of nature

*fully account for each act is to carry the intelligence of the nineteenth century backward to the reign of ignorance and superstition of the dark ages, when all was supernatural and the natural unknown.*⁹⁰

The newspaper, “in the interest of fair play,” interviewed “Mr. Abbott, the husband of Annie Abbott” who advised the reporter that he had tried to prevail upon his wife not to attempt any exhibition on Saturday, as her illness would not let her properly present the different features of the entertainment, and thus sustain her reputation as being possessed of phenomenal powers. She was under the care of a physician immediately before and after the entertainment.

Mr. Abbott agreed that many of her feats could be apparently well imitated but that Mr. Butler misrepresented the manner of doing them. As an example Richard cited the manner in which his wife held her arms in the lifting test. He claimed that she maintained the same position of body and arms in both stances, while Mr. Butler and other imitators did not. He added that no living man can lift her, no matter how attempted, providing the man has contact with her flesh. Richard also claimed that:

Mr. and Mrs. Abbott feel very much grieved over Saturday evening's proceedings at the opera house, and are determined that Mrs. Abbott's reputation and name shall be vindicated before the people of Aberdeen ere they leave the city, and to this end arrangements are now being made for an entertainment at the opera house within a few days should Mrs. Abbott's health admit of it.

The date will most likely be announced in Tuesday's News. The proceeds will be donated to the Aberdeen Benevolent Society. Mr. Abbott would like also to state that he was not responsible for the curtain being lowered when Mr. Butler

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*attempted to speak: that it was done by some member of the committee, and that he himself lifted it as soon as possible.*⁹¹

The grim event at the opera house took place on Saturday evening, August 8, 1891. The damning newspaper article appeared on Monday the 10th. Tuesday's newspaper featured an article with a headline of "They Have Skipped, Annie Abbott's Aggravated Aggregation Absconds."

As many people mistrusted, the Annie Abbott company it seems were not sincere in their proposition to stay in this city until the fair name of the freak could be vindicated, and her skirts cleared of the odium which the Butler exposé had thrust upon her. Some, however, contended that her "gall" was sufficient for even this emergency, and that she would stay and by sheer force of brass, aided by a confidence of long standing, coupled with the skill and cleverness which practice had vouchsafed to her, attempt to recover the laurels so ruthlessly snatched from her by a hypocritical individual in an unguarded moment.

The company left on the Northwestern last evening, and was ticketed to Fargo. They seem to have been suddenly seized with the consciousness that there were unfilled dates which should be looked after post haste, despite the fact that Mrs. Abbott was very greatly indisposed and wholly unfit to appear upon the stage in the role of a marvel until restored to health. Before leaving, however, Abbott found time to write the following:

"Friend Gray: I find it absolutely essential to fill the next three days engagements. Will send agent back and rebill this and other towns to fill in time to Minneapolis. Can't say what date we will

be able to put in here. Will notify you as soon as see him and determine. Keep it hot. Yours, Abbott.”⁹²

Annie Abbott did not return to Aberdeen. W. P. Butler went on the road, with a Miss Rooney, performing his rendition of the Annie Abbott experiments.

While in Aberdeen the Abbotts apparently retained a “Dr. Dix” from the town of Mitchell as their manager. The *Aberdeen Daily News* questioned whether he would stay with them on their “two year tour of the world.”⁹³ This is the first indication that there were plans to perform abroad.

In late August Annie Abbott was performing in Winnipeg. Always ready, willing and capable to overcome any adversity, Annie Abbott turned the recent difficulties to her advantage. The following news item appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* “Annie Abbott, the Georgia wonder, who appeared in this city some months ago, is in Winnipeg, where she created a big sensation. It appears that a South Dakota editor wrote up an alleged ‘exposé,’ and the entire town turned out to see her ‘knock out’ the editor, which she did.”⁹⁴

⁷¹ “Singular Wager, A Novel Contest Between Stockton Men Decided,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 February, 1891, p. 1

⁷² “Singular Wager, A Novel Contest Between Stockton Men Decided,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 February, 1891, p. 1; Letter from Alfred R. Wallace, reprinted in *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research*, Vol. XI, No. 533, Saturday, 21 March 1891, pp. 1-2.

⁷³ *Los Angeles Times*, 23 February 1891, p. 25.

⁷⁴ “Novel Exhibition of a Little Woman’s Strange Power,” *Los Angeles Times*, 25 February 1891, p. 7.

⁷⁵ “Novel Exhibition of a Little Woman’s Strange Power,” *Los Angeles Times*, 25 February 1891, p. 7.

⁷⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, 26 February 1891, p. 7.

⁷⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 26 February 1891, p. 7.

⁷⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, 26 February 1891, p. 4.

⁷⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, 27 February 1891.

⁸⁰ “The Georgia Wonder, Mrs. Abbott’s Manager Deposits his \$500, But Mr. Doyle Fails to Come to Time - The Proposed Contract or Agreement to Govern the Contest,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 February 1891, p. 8.

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- ⁸¹ "Mysterious Force, The 'Georgia Wonder' and Her Achievements, a Study of the Phenomena, What Mrs. Abbott Does and How - What is This Force? Unexplained Tests - Conscious or Unconscious?" *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1891, p. 10.
- ⁸² "Mysterious Force, The 'Georgia Wonder' and Her Achievements, a Study of the Phenomena, What Mrs. Abbott Does and How - What is This Force? Unexplained Tests - Conscious or Unconscious?" *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1891, p. 10.
- ⁸³ "Mysterious Force, The 'Georgia Wonder' and Her Achievements...", *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1891, p. 10.
- ⁸⁴ "Further Tests, Trying to Define Mrs. Abbott's Mysterious Influence, 'Human Current' on a Wire, Mysterious Twenty Pounds to be Accounted for - Fantastic and Illusive Tricks Played by the Scales," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 March 1891, p. 3.
- ⁸⁵ "Spook Sharps, Why the Spirits Failed to Materialize - A Dismal Séance," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 March 1891, p. 2.
- ⁸⁶ "Round About Town," *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican*, 4 March 1891.
- ⁸⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, 6 April 1891, p. 6; *Los Angeles Times*, 8 June 1891, p. 4.; *Los Angeles Times*, 13 February 1891.
- ⁸⁸ *Lincoln Evening News* (Nebraska), June 18, 1891, p. 1.
- ⁸⁹ *Evening Post* (Wellington, New Zealand) Vol. XLV, Issue 109, 9 May 1903, p. 3.
- ⁹⁰ "Is She a Fraud?, The Annie Abbott Entertainment at the Opera House Saturday Evening, Mysterious Mystifying Manipulations Mere Mechanics - Butler's Expose, What Abbott Says About It," *Aberdeen Daily News*, 10 August 1891, p. 4.
- ⁹¹ *Aberdeen Daily News*, 10 August 1891, p. 4.
- ⁹² "They Have Skipped, Annie Abbott's Aggravated Aggregation Absconds," *Aberdeen Daily News*, 11 August 1891.
- ⁹³ "The City in Brief," *Aberdeen Daily News*, 13 August 1891.
- ⁹⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, 28 August 1891.

Chapter 6 - "Setting the Thames On Fire" -- Triumph in London

The career of Annie Abbott was about to take a giant leap forward. No longer content with performing on the stages of small town America, Annie Abbott and Richard decided it was time to break into the big time. England and Europe beckoned. Annie Abbott was scheduled to perform for several weeks at the magnificent Alhambra music hall in London.

Seeking a grand entrance into the Old World, the Abbotts booked passage on the White Star Line's new twin screw steamer the *HMS Teutonic*. The ship had been in service just two years and was a magnificent creation. It was 582 feet long with a beam of 58 feet. It was capable of just over 20 knots and carried a total of 1490 passengers.

The *Teutonic* was the first steamship to be constructed with no rigged sails. Her two triple expansion engines, powering two propellers, provided enough power to enable her to become a contender for the Blue Riband, the award for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic. In fact, the *Teutonic* captured the Blue Riband on her August 13th-19th, 1891 westbound crossing.

The great ship attracted passengers of wealth and social standing. Keeping in mind the old adage, "to be important you must look important," the Abbotts traveled in the height of style. The ship left New York for Liverpool at 8:30 a.m. on the morning of October 21, 1891. Among the notable passengers were many whose wealth and social standing made them household names in the 1890s. Today most are long forgotten. The list included Meyer Guggenheim, the mining and smelting magnate who was to become the patriarch of the Guggenheim family, J. W. Barclay, Dr. C. Cameron, George Drummond, Mr. and Mrs. G. P. Eustis, The Earl of Fingall, Col. A. S. Gear,

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Col. Alt, Mr. and Mrs. Graeme Harrison, H. Staveley Hill, Capt. H. Vaughan Kent, Count G. Majlath, the Misses Marquand, Sir Lyon Playfair and Lady Playfair, Horace Plunkett, Capt. J. Hyde Sparks, Sir John Turney, E. H. Van Ingen, F. H. Villiers, and Capt. G. A. Wood.⁹⁵



**Annie Abbott's Picture in the
Women's Herald, 1891.**

A few weeks after the voyage Annie Abbott gave an interview to the *Woman's Herald* in London in which she said "...we had a most delightful trip across and a swift passage, the swiftest the ship has known. The captain and passengers declared that I exerted my powers over the engine and carried the boat along." Annie Abbott gave two performances onboard the *Teutonic* and claimed that she gave the proceeds from one of the exhibitions "for the benefit of the orphans

of seamen." Young Charlie, who accompanied Annie Abbott and Richard on the trip, sang a song, his first performance.⁹⁶

To her diary Annie Abbott confessed she "was very sick all the voyage." In his 1900 recounting of his travels with his mother, Charlie (with the help of his mother since he was a small child at the time the events occurred) recounted that "I remember the trip across very well, for my mother was awfully sick the first few days...".⁹⁷

The interview for *Woman's Herald* gives us a good look at Annie Abbott as she was about to soar to the pinnacle of her career. She is described as "fragile, very youthful in appearance, slight, rather dark with fine delicate features, a kind genial expression, very intelligent and attractive, with

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honest, tender eyes, eyes that win confidence and trust, and a pleasant warmth of manner that makes her visitors feel quite at their ease at once."

The "vivacity and good humour of both herself and her husband made the visit of the interviewer a pleasure to be remembered. She is serious and thoughtful, seems very much in earnest in regard to all the deeper problems of life, but quick to respond to fun and evidently keenly enjoys a joke even at her own expense."

Mr. Abbott is described as "a courteous gentleman evidently regarding his wife with admiration and affection."

Annie Abbott said that her exhibitions do not tire her and that "what seems exertion is really no exertion to me, and it does not injure my health." She also claimed that she first noticed the power "as a baby and it grew as I grew. From four to seven I became more or less conscious of it. Once I lifted my father up in his chair to everybody's wonder and my own consternation. I ran and hid myself after it was done."

While truthfully saying she was born in Milledgeville, Georgia, she then combined accuracy with falsehood as she said she was "the niece of a prominent Bishop - Bishop Haygood. I am myself a Methodist and used to give all my exhibitions in the church for charitable purposes. I built the first church in Waco, Texas. When funds were low I often raised them." She was in fact a Methodist; however, the other claims are false.

Part of Annie Abbott's persona was the aura of independent wealth. She told the interviewer that "we mean to remain in England as long as we feel inclined and then go on to Italy, France, and Australia, also India. Indeed, it is to us a pleasure trip. We have no definite plans, we follow our inclinations as they develop."

Commenting on her power she said, "I cannot lift dead weights - my force must come into contact with living things." Then, namedropping casually she added, "I do not know what it is, Mr. Edison, who tried and tested me says it is electricity,

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but such as we do not yet understand." There is no evidence that she ever had contact with Thomas Edison.

When asked about curing the sick Annie Abbott had a clever answer ready.

I have often cured sick persons, and persons suffering from neuralgia, toothache or headache. I once manipulated a lad in an epileptic fit, he recovered quickly and never had another. His mother always insisted that I had cured him. It may have been, I cannot tell. I cured a young man who had a paralyzed hand. But I take no money for that, I should be afraid to do so. It seems wrong to me to be paid for what I can do so naturally.

As the interview concluded, she added,

*Come and see me again at any time, everybody tells me as you have done that they feel as if they and I were friends at once. I like to see people and I always make them welcome. I am glad to have this strange power, but I am most glad that with it I can relieve suffering and pain, and cure persons of many forms of illness, that is indeed something to live for.*⁹⁸

This is her first claim to have the power of healing.

After arriving at Liverpool on Wednesday, October 28, Annie Abbott wrote in her diary, "Mr. A. & myself & baby well & hearty, landed in London Wednesday evening [November 4, 1891] at 3 o'clock. Began work one week after at the Alhambra to crowded houses for 6 weeks."⁹⁹

Annie Abbott's exhibitions were not the only entertainments given nightly at the Alhambra. Variety shows were in vogue, and she shared the billing with the now mostly forgotten acts of Oriella Grand Ballet, Signorina Ferrero and Charles Lauri, Harriet Vernon, Marie Lloyd, the Alfonzo Azzagilosk, the Hylton St. - Just Trio, May Clarke, G. W.

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Fyvie, Sam Redfern, D. J. Macarthy and T. Leamore, and The Sioux, a New Comic Pantomime by Charles Lauri's Troupe and Corps de ballet. The theatre opened at 7:45 p.m. and closed at 11:30 p.m.¹⁰⁰ But none of the other acts were to receive the attention that Annie Abbott's "The Little Georgia Magnet" did.

On November 12, 1891 Annie Abbott gave a performance for the Prince of Wales. Beginning on Saturday November 7th, His Royal Highness (H.R.H.), the Prince of Wales, later to become King Edward VII, began a week of partying to celebrate his 50th birthday at Sandringham House, the country retreat of the British monarchs.¹⁰¹ The activities ended on November 14th. The guest lists in *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* make no mention of Annie Abbott at Sandringham. However, this is no surprise since her appearance would be as an entertainer rather than as a guest.¹⁰²

Annie Abbott's diary reads,

"Visited H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Princess Louise. Duke of Sutherland. & the Duchess, Duke of Cambridge 3 times. I received many gifts. Here is a partial list:

[From] (*Rothchild* [Rothschild] received 42 pounds, *Duchess Manchester* received 20 pounds) *Mrs. MC* 42 pounds. *Lady Sevitt* 42 pounds. *Savoy Hotel* 40 pounds. *Duke of Sutherland - a court Photo with Gold Frame* cost 42 pounds. *Prince of Wales Diamond Bracelet*. *Duke of Cambridge Photo - Gold Frame (and Diamond Bracelet)*. *Whiteley's - Gold Bracelet with diamonds and sapphires*. (*Col. North diamond Pin*) *Mrs. Machie Sr. - silver for dresses*. *Medal & certificate from the Athletic Institute of London*. *Mr. Pinkney Silver Jewelry case*.¹⁰³

Forty two pounds was worth approximately \$204 in 1891, a huge sum relative to the \$14 *monthly* wage of males employed in agriculture in places like Milledgeville or relative to the outstanding \$40-48 *monthly* wage at the time earned by

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

the newly conceived occupation of typist-stenographers.¹⁰⁴ Forty two pounds in 1891 would be worth nearly \$5,000 in today's dollars.¹⁰⁵

Young Charlie would later write, "In company with doctors and other investigators, the Prince of Wales called at our hotel several times and each time took me on his knee. Before going he generally gave me a shilling. Once I sat on his plug hat and spoiled it, which made him a little mad. I don't remember of him [sic] calling after that."¹⁰⁶

The Star newspaper wrote,

*Miss Annie Abbott, 'the little Georgia Magnet,' is an obvious American, and although her normal temperature is ten degrees lower than that of the ordinary human being, she seems to enjoy good health and high spirits. She is young and pretty, and well proportioned, except in the matter of her hands and feet, which are noticeably large. On Thursday last the Electric Lady went down to Sandringham and it may be taken for granted that she fairly electrified the Prince.*¹⁰⁷

Very casually, as if she visited with royalty on a daily basis, she described to *The Star* reporter how

down at Sandringham the other night, the Prince had a very bad headache, and wouldn't believe me for a long time when I said I could cure him. He let me try at last, and I put my hands on his head, finding the right place by the jump he gave, when my hand neared the seat of the pain. If you are well there is no pain though you certainly feel the establishment of the contact; but you feel a certain shock if you are ill. Oh yes, the Prince was quite cured.

She added tantalizingly, "I never had a better floor to work on than that, by the way, I don't know what it was, but it was so shiny that the gentlemen were sliding about it when

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they tried to lift me or push me over - but it suited me perfectly.”¹⁰⁸

Annie Abbott gave her first public performance Monday November 16, 1891 at the Alhambra Theatre of Varieties, beginning about 10 p.m.¹⁰⁹ However, as was her custom, she gave a preview performance two days earlier for the newspapers, special guests and men of science, including Lord Claud Hamilton, Sir Lyon Playfair, Sir George Prescott, Sir E. A. Galsworthy, Sir Augustus Harris, Mr. Dixon Hartland, M. P., Dr. Robson Roose, Dr. Johnstone, Dr. J. A. Riley, and Mr. Lennox Browne.¹¹⁰

She is described as “pretty and petite, with nothing uncanny about her, save, perhaps, a pair of dark piercing eyes.” Her temperature was taken and found to be abnormally low, 94 degrees while her pulse, which was declared to be feeble, beat 84 to the minute.¹¹¹

It was no wonder that her heart rate was 84 beats per minute. Dixie Haygood had come a long way from the dusty rural Old South village of Milledgeville and its population in 1890 of 3,332. Now she was Annie Abbott, “the Little Georgia Magnet,” standing on the stage of the Alhambra in London facing a group of important and highly-educated men. She had to be convincing as in two days she would be facing a full house of 5,000 spectators.¹¹²

The Alhambra music hall was a huge theater in the style of a Moorish palace. It stood on the east side of Leicester Square in London. The playwright George Bernard Shaw described the Alhambra as “a huge circular theatre, lighted by small lamps arranged in continuous lines around the auditorium. The atmosphere was hot, and flavoured with gas, cigar smoke and effervescing liquors.”

The performance on November 14 for the select audience was a huge success. The *Daily Telegraph* wrote that if she had performed in the 17th century she “would, beyond all doubt, have been burnt as a witch.”¹¹³

Charlie, with Annie Abbott’s help, would later describe the Alhambra as “a great big house, much larger than anything

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I had ever seen in this country, and from the stage it looked like there were thousands of people in front. And I reckon there were four or five thousand. People nearly went wild over my mother's performance there and hundreds of people wanted to get on the stage to test her power."¹¹⁴

The reviews in the newspapers of the private performance could not have been better on November 16, the day of her debut. A huge crowd was assured from the enthusiastic tone of the praise. The *Daily Telegraph* article carried the headline "A Wonderful Woman" and proclaimed "the powers of Annie Abbott...are so startling and so novel...that it will not be surprising to find a widespread spirit of incredulity abroad among those who miss the opportunity now before them of making acquaintance with what practically amounts to a new force in nature." With awe, her feats were described as merely requiring "a touch of the magic fingers" as she "proved herself able to set at nought the laws of gravitation in a manner certainly unrecorded by the scientists of the past or the present."¹¹⁵

After describing the performance the *Telegraph* concluded with "...it cannot be doubted that a vast public...will be drawn to witness so novel and unique an exhibition of powers which a less scientific generation would, without hesitation, have styled supernatural."¹¹⁶

Extracting and commenting on the *Telegraph's* article, Ch. Richet in the French *Annales des Sciences Psychiques* (*Annals of Spiritual Sciences*)¹¹⁷ described strange noises similar to electric noises whenever a plain crystal glass was touched to her body. This phenomenon evoked a loud debate among observers. Richet explained, "I was scared and at the same time fascinated by what I saw that day." Annie Abbott looked like she was in a daze during her experiments. Her keen eyes looked fixed, and it seemed "that her mind was in another world or even another dimension." Richet said he was more confused after having had the privilege to observe Miss Abbott's show than he was before. In order to explain what they had seen, some people relied on mental suggestions.

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Others believed it to be "the action of toxic and medicinal substances." Others, including Richet who proclaimed himself not to be a superstitious person, saw it as psychic action or even the action of a witch.

All was not entirely positive, however. *The Times* (London) referred to her as a "Mahatma of the highest order, or else a remarkably clever lady conjuror." After describing the performance it was noted that "nobody could lift Miss Abbott by her bare arms, but anybody could lift her upon placing a handkerchief between his hands and her flesh." It was noted in that case that a handkerchief was a non-conductor of Miss Abbott's "force." Nevertheless, by holding one end of a handkerchief while a boy held the other, she appeared to be able to transmit her force of irremovability to him, showing the handkerchief to be a conductor. *The Times* added, "The tests applied were not sufficiently severe to justify a description of the whole affair as being certainly anything more than a clever performance, and there were certain respects in which it was weak."¹¹⁸

The sharp eyes and quick mind of *The Times* reporter disclosed a problem with the force and the handkerchief. They did not, however, identify the boy at the other end of the handkerchief as, most likely young Charlie Haygood.

The following day *The Times* carried three letters to the editor written by members of the committee who were on the stage during the Annie Abbott performance. The three were convinced that the feats were genuine. One man said that when touched by Annie Abbott he "felt a vibration through my hand somewhat similar to what I have on occasions experienced when near a powerful dynamo."

Another letter to the editor proclaimed his "conviction of its [the performance's] thorough genuineness." He had suspected that there might be some "magnetic or other apparatus at work" but was reassured when "Miss Abbott repeated many of these feats in the carpeted room of the directors a few minutes after the stage performance." He did

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

note however that she "admitted that her power was less when standing on a Turkey carpet than on wood or glass."

This man also had been informed "some days since by a passenger to England with Miss Abbott in the *Teutonic* that during the passage she had gone through the whole performance in the saloon of that ship, under the personal patronage of Sir Lyon Playfair, whose capabilities to judge of the fairness of such proceedings are probably unequalled."

Seventy-three-year-old Sir Lyon Playfair was a member of Parliament and formerly Postmaster General, Chairman of Ways and Means, and Vice-President of the Committee on Education. He had also been a chemistry professor.

The third man wrote, "...from whatever source the power came, it did not come from anything in, upon, or under the stage, and it could be exercised on any part of the stage." Being suspicious, this man "ascertained that two chairs, and two only belonged to her and her exhibitors, and that the boy who appeared for a short time as a magnetic medium was brought in out of the street, and was not connected with the establishment." He obtained his information from the "stage carpenters of the Alhambra" with whom he has been on friendly terms for years.¹¹⁹

The Star reporter sought out Annie Abbott after the performance and was given a private interview. She was charming and answered his questions without giving away anything substantial about how the feats were accomplished, saying that she herself did not know what her power was or how it worked. Casually, Annie Abbott mentioned that "I have met Sullivan [John L. Sullivan, heavyweight boxer] and Kilrain [Jake Kilrain, heavyweight boxer] in these encounters and really can work much better with such men."¹²⁰ *The Star* concluded that she "is possessed of wonderful powers."¹²¹

However, Annie Abbott, having been interviewed many times by the press, may have suspected that there was more to the polite *Star* reporter than met the eye. While he was courteous and apparently innocently inquisitive, he had a private agenda.

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⁹⁵ *New York Times*, 22 October 1891.

⁹⁶ *Woman's Herald*, #162, vol. IV, Dec. 5, 1891; Charlie's Story, *Washington Star*.

⁹⁷ *Woman's Herald*; Charlie's Story, *Washington Star*; Annie Abbott Diary. Dixie Haygood's Diary is an unpublished manuscript written by Dixie Haygood in 1892 apparently on a day by day basis.

⁹⁸ *Woman's Herald*

⁹⁹ Dixie Haygood Diary.

¹⁰⁰ *The Star* (London newspaper), 20 November 1891.

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, 9 November 1891.

¹⁰² *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 1891.

¹⁰³ Dixie Haygood Diary

¹⁰⁴ *Union-Recorder*, 25 August 1896; Fred A. Shannon, *The Centennial Years: A Political and Economic History of America from the Late 1870s to the Early 1890s*, Robert Huhn Jones (ed.), Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967, p. 198.

¹⁰⁵ Eric Nye, (n.d.) Pounds to Dollars Historical Conversion of Currency, retrieved 21 February 2010 from <http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/numimage/Currency.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ Charlie's Story, *Washington Star*.

¹⁰⁷ "A Great Draw, The Magnetic Lady Caught While Insulated, She Tells a 'Star' Man About Her Surprising Powers and Their Strange Limitations - She Cures the Prince of Wales of a Headache," *The Star*, 16 November 1891.

¹⁰⁸ *The Star*, 16 November 1891.

¹⁰⁹ *The Star*, 16 November 1891.

¹¹⁰ "A Wonderful Woman," *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1891, p. 3; *Woman's Herald*.

¹¹¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1891, p. 3.

¹¹² James C. Bonner, *Milledgeville, Georgia's Antebellum Capital*, Macon, Mercer University Press, 1985. Reprint of University of Georgia Press, 1978, p. 233.

¹¹³ *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1891, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Charlie's Story, *Washington Star*.

¹¹⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1891, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 16 November 1891, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ *Annales des Sciences Psychiques (Annals of Spiritual Sciences)*, "Une Femme Étrange (A Strange Woman)," No. 1, 1892, pp. 60-62.

¹¹⁸ "A 'Magnetic Lady,'" *The Times*, 16 November 1891, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ "The Magnetic Lady," *The Times*, 17 November 1891, p. 7.

¹²⁰ There is no evidence she met either Sullivan or Kilrain.

¹²¹ *The Star*, 16 November 1891.

Chapter 7 - The Alhambra and the Attack of *The Star* Newspaper

There was a major change in the tone of the *Star* articles between November 16th and November 17th. On the 16th Annie Abbott was touted as “the most remarkable woman of the century” who “is possessed of wonderful powers.” This was merely a ploy on the part of the *Star* to build up Annie Abbott so she could be torn down by the newspaper. Doubtless the articles were written with the idea of increasing newspaper circulation. What was to come in the following days was an attack on Annie Abbott and her performances more savage than any she had ever weathered before.

The first public performance at the Alhambra, November 16th, was to a packed house. “Every seat, every inch of standing room was filled.”¹²² Mr. Abbott did not appear to introduce his wife or work as the stage manager as was his standard practice. In his place was the manager of the Alhambra who reported that Mr. Abbott had a cold. One of the committeemen was a Guardsman, “a young fellow of fine physique, and the audience seemed to have pinned their faith in his superior strength.” Annie Abbott sought him out and invited him to lift her. “With the handkerchief between them he raised her high in the air, but when his bare hands clasped her bare elbows she was, to use his own phrase, ‘a dead wall’.” The audience was described as “perfectly good-humoured” and the excitement was high throughout the performance.¹²³

The shooting star of fame that Annie Abbott was riding had reached its zenith. However, there would be many more packed houses, astonished spectators and successful performances in the coming weeks, months and even years. *The British Medical Journal* explained,

*Just now there is a rush to see a new performer, who is wise enough to be a little uncertain in her own mind whether she embodies the “odic” force or the magnetic or the mesmeric, or a compound of all of them, thus offering an interesting medley of doubts which does not pledge her to anything, and leaves it open to all the miracle-mongers to offer their own solution. Her feats rival if they do not excel some of those of the “strong men” who have preceded her on the stage and in public favour; nevertheless she is a weak woman, whose modus operandi dispenses with any obvious apparatus, and is apparently difficult of detection. The “magnetic” theory holds the field, although it is obviously untenable, and the trick appears to be one of physical ingenuity, such as have grown common enough in the United States. Meantime, people will naturally be anxious to see the new mystery while it is still novel here or until it is found out. How long that will be we shall not attempt to forecast.*¹²⁴

Beginning the day after the initial performance at the Alhambra, Annie Abbott would be dogged by the specter of being a fraud. *The Star’s* first attack article was headlined, “The ‘Magnetic Lady’, A ‘Star’ Man Solves the Mystery.”

The reporter had gone to the performance and closely observed the feats. The result was that he got ideas. He claimed that he went home, experimented, and discovered that he also was possessed of the very same extraordinary magnetic powers. And he claimed that, not only he, but every other person is endowed with the identical gift which enabled Annie Abbott to work miracles.¹²⁵

In a long and detailed article *The Star* looked at the various tests performed by Annie Abbott and explained how *The Star* believed they were done. The highly critical article

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proclaimed that "artfulness is more than magnetism and the simplicity of men is greater than their strength." The newspaper believed that the "secret of the whole of the apparently wonderful business is this: Mrs. Abbott pretends to resist force. She does nothing of the kind. She merely dodges it. It is all done by a nice adjustment of physical strains."¹²⁶

The Star reporter wrote that the clue which tipped him off to the method used was when

Mrs. Abbott pretends to communicate her marvelous power to a boy by laying her bare hands on his, and the consequence is that the boy cannot be lifted by his elbows from the ground. The elbows in this and other tricks are held against the sides, and it is by the elbows that the lifting has to be done. Well, the Star man was in this particular lift last night, and he perceived that the boy's elbows, when he could not be lifted by them were not firmly fixed by his side, but were considerably forward of his body. The discovery gave away the show.

It needs no magnetism to prevent your lifting a person by the elbows when the elbows are not in a straight line with the body, because if the elbows are shifted ever such a little way forward or back, or if one elbow only is ever so slightly given away, the lifting force is diverted, and you do not get a vertical lift at all. All Mrs. Abbott's magnetism in these lifting feats consists in artfully keeping her elbows, or the elbows of the "magnetized" boy, out of the perpendicular.¹²⁷

The scathing article went on to describe how the various feats were performed and then went after Annie Abbott herself. "Mrs. Abbott told *The Star* man who interviewed her that there was in her wonderful powers a great deal that she did not understand nor the doctors either. Bless her, she understands it

well enough or she would not shift that boy's elbows.She understands well enough that what happens when she cannot be lifted is that her elbows are out of the straight.”¹²⁸

The article concluded by saying,

*“The Little Georgia Magnet” and her husband must laugh when they see the scientists fooling themselves like this. It is no new discovery on Mrs. Abbott’s part that a committee of doctors is generally easy to fool. It is one of the oldest of showman’s devices. Your scientific man has always a mind open to wonderful theories. He knows enough of the wonders of scientific knowledge to be able to imagine greater wonders. And he is so set on the scientifically marvelous that he overlooks simple explanations. A committee of navvies [manual laborers working on civil engineering projects, typically working with shovels, picks and wheelbarrows] or practical mechanics, who know what “purchase” means, could never have been so wide of the mark.*¹²⁹

The Star claimed to have attempted to contact Annie Abbott to give her an opportunity to comment on their findings but got no further than her manager, Mr. Christiana [a.k.a. Christiansen], who stated, “we have had this kind of exposé before. We expect to have things written like this, and if they aren’t written we have to write them ourselves to make business, and get our big salaries. We expected something of the kind.” Hastily making excuses Christiana said that the performance was severely hampered by a crowd on the stage “bumping and plunging at her,” and “grabbing hold of her so that she could not give a representative exhibition.” He claimed that he had never seen “her work before so bad as she worked last night...” *The Star* pressed for more and Christiana confessed that “some of her tricks can be imitated. There’s plenty of people in this city who could lift people like she does...there are plenty of people who can imitate some of her

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tricks.”¹³⁰ Richard and Annie Abbott must have squirmed when reading the article. “Tricks” was a word they did not use in describing Annie Abbott’s feats.

The Star’s assault on Annie Abbott continued mercilessly for the next week. Sensing they had her on the defensive, and seeing opportunities for more headlines, the *Star* printed articles calling her performances “transparently simple” and “absurd.” They noted with glee how the “people jeered” and called derisively “elbows! elbows!” from “all over the house” when she attempted the lift experiments.¹³¹

It was reported that the cries of “elbows” were replaced with

loud and numerous cries of ‘Rats!’ The Little Georgia Magnet looked pained. But she was brave, and The Star man admired her and felt sorry for her as she stood there pale but smiling, ready to go on with the pretense of magnetizing a youth.

Regrettably, during this performance “in spite of the miraculous magnetism, he was lifted clean off his feet by a man who pressed the elbows close and firm to the sides before he began to lift.” The magnetized boy had been lifted.

It must have been a long week for Richard and Annie Abbott. Each day *The Star* attacked with caustic remarks, such as calling her performance “clever in its very audacity.” *The Star* also had been doing its homework reporting that the same “tricks” were performed by Lulu Hurst and that Hurst “was exposed in identically the same way, when her career closed rather abruptly, and she retired to her native Georgia in obscurity.” *The Star* publically asked if Annie Abbott “knows anything of this previous Georgian Magnet.” They added the threatening line “If she denies that she does, we shall have something further to say.” Annie Abbott must have taken a few deep breaths when she read that thunderbolt as it was much closer to the truth than *The Star* probably realized.

The Star attacked the performance whenever possible. *The Star* pointed out that “music-hall agents have been

overwhelmed with offers from people in the profession to do the same business as Mrs. Abbott's." One committeeman wrote *The Star* to describe Annie Abbott as "short, but powerfully built, though carefully dressed to convey the idea of fragility; her forearms are splendidly developed, and as muscular as those of a rowing man." Another committeeman was quoted as having noticed "Mrs. Abbott [during the chair lift] coolly put her knee beneath the crossbar forming the back of the chair and lifted it up with arms and leg combined. It was perfectly clear behind, though the outline of her dress would hide the action from the front....that was quite enough for me. The trickery is not even clever. Seen close, it is not on a level with street conjuring." *The Star* clearly was milking the story for all it was worth, but its attacks did not deter the audiences as Annie Abbott continued to pack the Alhambra.

An added attraction in one performance was the appearance of music hall manager and prize fighter Charlie Mitchell. Mitchell had fought the famous John L. Sullivan to a draw in a 30 round match. However, he failed to lift the Little Georgia Magnet. "He never had a chance," wrote a committeeman, "her arms were forward, backward, up, down, straight out, anywhere, in fact, but close to her sides. It was pretty plain that Mr. Mitchell had his own opinion of the way in which his strength had been counteracted, but he was too much in sympathy with the show to say more than 'It's a very clever performance.'"

The attacks on Annie Abbott got even stronger. *The Star* quoted the professional opinion of the publication *Music Hall* as saying that

a trick is one thing, deception another. If Mrs. Abbott had come forward and said, "I can do these tricks," all would have been well; but when she deliberately states that her force is magnetic, she enters into a wanton deception. Mrs. Abbott is a genuine show woman, but for the sake of the profession we wish she had come forward in true

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colors, and not tried to guy the medical profession and the Press.

Annie Abbott's credibility was further challenged when one week to the day after the first Alhambra performance others took to the stage with similar acts. One Miss Carrie Arnold "The Dynamic Phenomenon" appeared at the Pavilion and Tivoli Theatre. She performed the same feats as Annie Abbott but did not claim any special powers. At Sadler's Wells Theatre, Miss Laura Lincoln, "the Human Magnet," appeared with a similar show. She was not as polished a performer as Annie Abbott. *The Star* commented that "Magnets, unlike poets, are made, not born, and Miss Laura Lincoln has not quite finished the making." The performance was "just one step above what can be achieved by anyone at the first try, and just one step below Mrs. Abbott's."

One Miss Chirgwin, the "Marvelous Musical Magnetic Microbe," appeared at the Empire Theatre. She performed a parody of Annie Abbott and the other magnetic women, using a 20 foot long billiard cue and committeemen made of straw and sawdust dummies.¹³²

While London readers were being told of the problems with the magnetic exhibitions of Annie Abbott, readers in Georgia were getting a different view. The *Atlanta Constitution* carried an article on the front page with the title, "Cannot Move Her, All London Drawn to the Southern Wonder, Annie Abbott." The article, a "special" datelined London, was almost entirely positive and gave an alternate view to *The Star's* reporting of the first week at the Alhambra. The Alhambra was described as "besieged" by a "surging, seething mob" of good-natured spectators an hour before opening as "every day the excitement increases over her performance," which must be "one of the most remarkable exhibitions we have ever had here."

It was reported that on the afternoon of November 23 Annie Abbott was "engaged with several doctors and scientific men" for several hours as they tested her "in all ways that their skill and ingenuity could devise, and she stood them all."

According to the article Annie Abbott was said to be the biggest “draw” in London in years and was being paid \$800 per week, which was an enormous sum. The last sentence of the article suggested that some believed her performance was trickery as “many of the members of the American colony who believe the whole affair is a gigantic fake are laughing at the way staid Londoners are being humbugged.”¹³³

The *Union-Recorder*, in Milledgeville, quoted pieces of the same article for the local readers concluding with “the many friends and relatives of the pretty little woman of Milledgeville, her native city, will rejoice that she has attained fame and fortune.” There is no mention of the possibility of Annie Abbott’s performance being a “gigantic fake.”

After pursuing Annie Abbott for 10 days “the nightly imposter at the Alhambra ceased to have any attraction for *The Star* man.” Despite mentioning that during the November 25th performance “Ms. Abbott’s trickery failed her” when a man “catching her elbows in a quick grasp, lifted her a foot from the ground,” *The Star* eased off on their attacks.

The Star did report an accident during the November 27th performance.

*The electric lady was going through her tricks, and was performing that one which consists of lifting a man in a chair by the magnetic method of putting her knee beneath the cross-bar and levering the weight up. She was getting along splendidly, the victim was seated facing the audience...the fair magnetic one had just artfully placed her knee beneath the cross-bar, and was commencing to exert the electric force of her fore-arm on the chair back, when, crack! Snap! went something and the pieces of that deceptive cross-bar rolled upon the stage. It was very awkward.*¹³⁴

Annie Abbott probably was accustomed to the darts and jabs of newspapers and paid them little attention. Certainly, she was not swayed by their reporting. However, she must

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have gasped when she read on December 4th that "Miss Lulu Hurst, the original at the business, and the lady from whom Mrs. Annie Abbott copied all her tricks, is coming over from America to give public demonstrations of how it's done."¹³⁵

There was no date of Lulu Hurst's arrival mentioned. Annie Abbott may have thought of the difficult passage across the North Atlantic in winter...and hoped that Hurst would postpone her trip until Spring. As no evidence of a trip by Hurst has been discovered, the report by *The Star* may have been intended solely to further harass Annie Abbott.

The Woman's Herald, convinced of the sincerity of Annie Abbott and the veracity of her performances, concluded that any witnesses "cannot seriously believe it to be trickery." It was pointedly stated that "there is no mesmerism, no hypnotism, everything is performed in the most straightforward and simple manner."¹³⁶

In response to the possibility of trickery the *Woman's Herald* stated "it is not possible to talk face to face with Mrs. Abbott and believe her capable of such dissimulation."¹³⁷ The *Woman's Herald* had high praise for Annie Abbott saying "when persons cannot have any faith in phenomena is it not often a sign of ignorance; and when they impute trickery, may it not be because they do not look high enough for an explanation?"

The *New York Times* carried a curious article which may have been gleaned from various London newspapers. The article objectively stated that some considered her a "humbug" while others "proved to their own satisfaction that she was possessed of all the magnetic power she claims." Also of note is that the *New York Times* wrote that "Miss Abbott has twice been the guest of the Prince of Wales." Although this may be correct, Annie Abbott would later claim she had been there three times. The article reported that the Prince of Wales "tried to lift Miss Abbott by the waist, but failed." Lifts by the waist were not part of the performance as she only allowed herself to be lifted - or not - by the elbows. It seems unlikely that the

Prince of Wales attempted to lift her by the waist, and if he had done so he would probably have been successful.

The article also mentioned that the Duke of Teck [the father of Queen Mary] and the Marquis of Lorne [husband of Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's 4th daughter] also tried, and failed, to lift her. Annie Abbott was said to have been the "guest of the Duke of Cambridge, the Rothschilds, the Duchess of Sutherland, and other leading members of the aristocracy."¹³⁸ She was also "engaged to perform before the Queen and princess Louise."¹³⁹ In her diary Annie Abbott listed the Duke of Cambridge three times, the Rothschilds, the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland, and Princess Louise. However, as Annie Abbott did not mention performing for Queen Victoria in her diary it seems most likely that she never did.¹⁴⁰

The *New York Times* article commented that

Her performances before royalty have resulted, aside from her enhanced value as a "card" at the Alhambra, in pecuniary benefit to herself. The Prince of Wales gave her a diamond bracelet and the Duke of Cambridge presented her with a necklace of diamonds and sapphires. All the royal personages before whom she exhibited her powers or tricks, as the case may be, gave her their autographs. These she prizes very highly and declares that no amount of money could purchase them.

Regrettably, the pages containing the autographs from the royals have been removed from her autograph book.¹⁴¹ The *New York Times* article was quoted extensively in Milledgeville's *Union Recorder*, which discreetly omitted the comments about the doubts surrounding her magnetic powers.¹⁴²

One of the highest compliments paid to Annie Abbott's performances in London was that an entire appendix, named *The Magnetic Lady, or A Human Magnet De-Magnetized*, was

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especially written for J. N. Maskelyne's book after the initial publication of the book, *The Supernatural?* in 1891.¹⁴³ Maskelyne was an avid debunker of spiritualism and became a renowned magician. His appendix appeared in 1892 and began,

The first edition of this book was barely in print before we were favoured with yet another instance of the prevailing rage for occultism. There has appeared in our midst a young lady, hailing from the land of new religions and wooden nutmegs, professing to possess abnormal powers, in the form of some occult magnetic influence, enabling her to perform feats of strength out of all proportion to her physical development.

To say that this young lady has set the Thames on fire is a very mild way of putting it. London itself is ablaze with excitement, "for a limited number of nights only." Be her supposed powers what they may, they have, at any rate sufficed to set some of the Press by the ears, and to reduce some few members of the Medical Profession to the verge of twaddling incoherency. All sorts and conditions of men are running mad with the assumption that this strange influence is inexplicable on any other basis than that afforded by some such theory as either "Animal Magnetism," "Electro-biology," "Psychic" or "Odic Force," or some other hypothetical influence as yet little understood... The Spiritualists claim her as a "powerful physical medium." ...

She has had imitators, of course. They have sprung up like mushrooms; but as yet they have not been a great success. These things require practice

and strength. Without these two qualifications, all the theory in the world is useless.

The Annie Abbott performances concluded at the Alhambra the week of December 21st. “It would appear that a reaction was setting in against this latest mystery” and they were “not received with such awe as before,” according to the *Daily Telegraph*.¹⁴⁴ It was time to take the show on the road outside of London.

¹²² “The ‘Magnetic’ Lady, A ‘Star’ Man Solves the Mystery,” *The Star*, 17 November 1891.

¹²³ “The Wonderful Woman,” *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1891, p. 3.

¹²⁴ *The British Medical Journal*, 21 November 1891, p. 1109

¹²⁵ “The ‘Magnetic’ Lady, A ‘Star’ Man Solves the Mystery,” *The Star*, 17 November 1891.

¹²⁶ *The Star*, 17 November 1891.

¹²⁷ *The Star*, 17 November 1891.

¹²⁸ *The Star*, 17 November 1891.

¹²⁹ *The Star*, 17 November 1891.

¹³⁰ *The Star*, 17 November 1891.

¹³¹ *The Star*, 17-25 November 1891.

¹³² *The Star*, 17-25 November 1891.

¹³³ “Cannot Move Her, All London Drawn to the Southern Wonder, Annie Abbott, Victorious in All Sorts of Tests, A Smart Reporter, Who Thought He Knew the Trick Tries to Lift Annie and Fails, Charley Mitchell, the Pugilist, After Several Unsuccessful Efforts, Retires From the Stage - Attracting Crowds,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 25 November 1891, p. 1.

¹³⁴ “The Lady Magnet, New Trick - A Chair Magnetised, but Suffers in the Process,” *The Star*, 28 November 1891.

¹³⁵ “The Lady Magnet, Deceives a Poor Trusting Interviewer Whose Faith Swallows Up His Intelligence,” *The Star*, 4 December 1891. Note that Lulu had given up performing in 1885 and later, in 1897, would write her autobiography, called *Lulu Hurst (The Georgia Wonder) Writes Her Autobiography and for the First Time Explains and Demonstrates The Great Secret of her Marvelous Power*, in which she would describe the power as one of position and leverage, while those who were attempting to overpower her were under the delusion that great force must be used against her.

¹³⁶ *Woman’s Herald*, 5 December 1891.

¹³⁷ *Woman’s Herald*, 5 December 1891.

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¹³⁸ Duke of Teck [1837-1900, member of the Royal Family, father of Queen Mary]; the Marquis of Lorne [1845-1914, husband of Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's 4th daughter]; Duke of Cambridge [1819-1904]; the Rothschilds [1840-1915 Nathan Mayer Rothschild and 1844-1935 his wife Emma Louise von Rothschild].

¹³⁹ *NY Times*, 6 December 1891.

¹⁴⁰ Dixie Haygood Diary. These included the Duke [1828-1892] and Duchess [died 1912] of Sutherland, and Princess Louise [1848-1939 6th child and 4th daughter of Queen Victoria].

¹⁴¹ "Foreign Dramatic News," *NY Times*, 6 December 1891, p. 13; Dixie Haygood Autograph book.

¹⁴² *Union Recorder*, 2 February 1892.

¹⁴³ J. N. Maskelyne, *The Magnetic Lady, or A Human Magnet De-Magnetized* an appendix to *The Supernatural?* (by Lionel A. Weatherly, M.D. and, Bristol, England: J. W. Arrowsmith, ca. 1891), 1892.

¹⁴⁴ "Alhambra Theatre," *Daily Telegraph*, 22 December 1891.

Chapter 8 - The Tour in Europe

It is unclear how extensive the tour of England was. A silver knife, fork and spoon set found many years later near her hometown of Milledgeville was labeled “Annie Abbott, Southport, Eng., 1892,” attesting to the flow of souvenirs that Annie Abbott accumulated on her travels.¹⁴⁵ Later Charlie wrote that the tour lasted “a year” after which they went to Hamburg, Germany. However, on February 20, 1892, Annie Abbott wrote in her diary,

*Left Leeds Yorkshire for Berlin Germany. Reached the City Monday morning [February 22nd]. Menopole Hotel played Winter Gardens 2 weeks engagement - didn't like the place. Beautiful City - Cleanest & Finest city in the world so said.*¹⁴⁶

On her first day on the Continent, Annie Abbott noted in her diary “did not visit - so tired slept all day. Two nights & day journey. Came through Holland noticed the peculiar dress of the Hollanders.” She wrote that she gave a “poor performance” to “good houses.”¹⁴⁷ Regrettably, she did not specify what went wrong during the performances. The problem may have been poor committeemen or failure to perform up to her own expectations.

On February 26th she “slept late” and went to “a private séance before the Prince & men of prominence in room 54 Menopole hotel.”

The following day she made a notation to have the Steens photographed. This is almost certainly Charles N. and Martha Steen, and a “Mr. Stein,” who was later mentioned in Charlie’s story as being their manager. She also gave an “entertainment before the Royalties for which received a basket of Lovely Flowers.”¹⁴⁸

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They (Mr. Abbott, Charlie and Annie Abbott) stayed in Berlin through March 10th giving performances most evenings. While in Berlin she went to the zoo where she saw an "elephant perform," and to the art museum with "lovely pictures & sculpture." The Lor Gardens, Natural Art Gallery and the Berlin Wax Works were among the places that she visited. She also "sat to be drawn by the Gentleman's Crayon." She mailed to Hattie [Harriett Jarratt Cornell, her younger sister] a photo of the "Royal family & the Queen." "Mr. A. gave me a nice jewelry case." She always referred to Richard Abbey (Abbott) as "Mr. A."

On March 1st she "wrote home - to Hattie, Uncle James Clopton, Mother & children. Sent press notices to Hattie." She also made a notation presumably about dresses, "lilac silk trimmed in feathers. Pink. Silk trimmed in pink Feather trimming."

On Wednesday March 2nd she went shopping and to "mantle makers." She also gave a private performance for a newspaper editor. There, she "caused a watch to stop in 35 minutes after placing it next [to] my flesh." Written into the autograph album is the testimony concerning a feat that was entirely new.

Mrs. Annie Abbott put the watch of the undersigned next to her skin for 35 minutes. When she showed it to the owner after 35 minutes, it had stopped. After holding it in my hand for another 8 minutes, it began running again. During the time referred to, Mrs. Abbott did not leave the room for one minute, nor was she out of sight of the undersigned, who thinks it a most remarkable manifestation of her powers. A. Templehoffer.

On March 11th they arrived in Hamburg. A few days later she went for a stroll with a woman named "Jimmie" who soon was to leave for "Oldham." She sent home Easter cards to the orphans' home, Hattie, Maud and Fred.

On Saturday March 12th, Annie Abbott wrote in her diary,

A visit through the city & encountered a séance with Charlie [in this instance, she used the word “séance” to mean a mystical gathering]. A crowd of about one thousand gathered around us because he had a silk hat. We had to take refuge in a shop, call a cab to escape them. Bought some [illegible] works which was lovely. Good House, good committeemen.”



**Probably Charlie Haygood in the silk top hat that caused excitement in Germany.
(Source: Dixie Haygood's photo album)**

A telegram arrived on March 15th requesting that they return to the Alhambra. Annie Abbott “didn’t care to make a return.” It may have been that her memories of her triumphant weeks in London were tarnished by the abuse she received from those who thought her work a fraud, or it may have been that she had been in London since November and was simply ready to move on.

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She sent "Mama One Hundred & 25 Dollars."

On March 17th she stayed in as she was "very unwell all day." The following day she was "up late severe headaches" but did visit the "very fine Zoo." The next day, Saturday, she "dined with some Lady Friends" but on the 19th was "in bed all day Sunday Sick."

On Tuesday March 22nd Annie Abbott went to various museums and saw "very fine pictures & statues of marble. Visited some friends. Cured a child of ear ache. Received a photo of friend & of a Hamburg Peasant Flower Girl." Health cures were infrequent. It is very interesting that Annie Abbott included this brief reference in her private diary that, in all likelihood, she did not expect others to read. This reference seems to indicate that she believed her healing powers were real.

After Lubeck they went to Bremen. From Bremen they went to London where the first performance was the evening of April 4th to a "crowded House, good committee, grand reception." They stayed in London for two weeks. During that time they visited Buckingham Palace, Kensington Palace, Westminster Abbey, White Chapel and the Tower of London and "saw the place where Jack the Ripper committed his Last murder." She bought dresses for herself and Maud.

They left England again on Sunday April 17th for Cologne, Germany. Crossing the Channel, Annie Abbott was seasick all day. They arrived at 11 p.m. and were surprised to find "everything covered with snow & ice middle of April!"

She was again "sick with cold in bed all day" on the 18th. While often sick she never allowed her own illnesses to keep her from her performances...except in Aberdeen, South Dakota where she used illness as an excuse for a poor performance, which led to her sudden departure from town and the cancellation of her subsequent engagements there.

While traveling she frequently visited churches and museums. Often she went to the zoo. Some of these sightseeing outings may have been for Charlie but she enjoyed art museums.

Chapter 8 - The Tour in Europe

On Friday April 22nd she gave her first performance in Dusseldorf. The following day she left for Leipzig, which she described as a “wicked city,” where she wrote, “first performance am ashamed to write was on Sunday our Lord’s day & a very poor house and bad show. Sick all week.”¹⁴⁹

Annie Abbott had a “spell of the Blues. Home sick” on April 26th and spent the day sick in bed. The following day she went to the zoo and saw “the man stick needles and swords in to him self. Turned sick left the hall.”¹⁵⁰ It is unclear whether she was sickened by the needles and sword performance or this was a continuation of the physical illness that had been troubling her. She also commented that she was practicing her music. There are hints that she both played instruments and sang.

In early May she performed in Vienna for a “full house” and received good notices in the press. As usual she visited museums, the Palace, art galleries and toured the city. From Vienna she went to Graz in Austria and performed for a full house, although she said that the committee was “sullen” and it was a “bad performance,” which was because there was no interpreter.

On May 16th she went to Budapest where she enjoyed “good houses - on a Salary & percent - big money.” She had photos taken, visited “places of interest,” had lunch with “swell people,” went riding and visited with the American consul.

The next stop on her continuous round of European cities was Bucharest, Romania, which she thought “a poor place.” She wrote “Did not like the people, they seem so stupid.” She spent a day in bed after a “bad night” before going on to Budapest. She enjoyed “crowded houses for 3 nights,” then “quit Thursday on account of bad committeemen” and returned to Bucharest.

June 1st she “sent home a check...for \$662. Sent Sister Catherine \$15.00.” While on tour, Annie Abbott had placed her daughter, Maud, in the Appleton Church Home, which was established for the care and education of indigent Confederate orphans, in Macon. For the rest of her life, Maud remembered

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the place as a Catholic convent with strict nuns. In reality, the orphanage was Episcopal and run by the Order of St. Katherine. As it happened, Sister Katharine [Catherine] was the name of the head deaconess of the orphanage.¹⁵¹

Back again in Budapest she gave a "private entertainment" and was paid "300 Florinos" [florins] but lost her "diamond pendulum" - stolen at the Hotel. Next she went to Milan where she had crowded houses the last two nights and "met the lady juggler."

June 9th Annie Abbott "had tooth worked on by an American dentist. Dr. Terry could not fix it. Ached something terrible." A cynic or skeptic might suggest that one who could cure the headaches and ear aches of others ought to be able to cure her own toothache. However, as Annie Abbott said, there is much about her power that is not understood.

The performances must have sometimes been under unusual circumstances, for she wrote

Left the Theatre, went to a music hall, had a crowded house, opera company on with my show. Noisy house. Show went well. At Dance Place. Good house. A big racket but came out all right. Called before the curtain 5 times.

This may be the only time she referred to her performances as a "show."

"The holy city of Venice" was next on the itinerary. There, she enjoyed the "old churches and palaces," bought a bracelet for Maud, "went bathing 2 days in the Adriatic Sea."

In Verona, Italy she had good performances for poor houses. She

took a cab visited Juliet grave & house saw the balcony on which she stood to see her lover Romeo. And the accordion which he played is hanging on the outside of the wall. Left a card & photo of myself at the tomb of Juliet. Charlie stood in the tomb.

They went to Mantua, Italy and Verona where she went to the top of the “2nd largest theater in the world.” They then went to Bologna “which give[s] the name of Balony sausage,” and “went to the top of the leaning tower 600 steps 183 yards. A grand view from the top for miles.”

Florence was “a very pretty city” but Genoa was not successful as “tour not billed, lost 2 nights.”

The blotter of the diary on the week of June 20th has a child’s drawing of a man in a black hat smoking a cigar. It may be presumed that this man is Richard Abbott, Mr. Abbott, drawn by Charlie.

The next stop was “Roma” where there was much to see. Annie Abbott took in “the ancient buildings” and St. Peter’s, St. Paul’s, and various museums. She also went to a bull fight.

From Rome she traveled to Naples where “Mr. A quite sick.” They left the next day for Salerno and Palermo, Sicily. She enjoyed “splendid bathing.” “The Volcano at Naples [Vesuvius] is a grand sight. Went out of the city to the bathing place, had a bath in the Sea. Water quite cold could not stay in very long. Charlie enjoyed it very much.”

Several times Annie Abbott wrote, in the form of letters to the *Union Recorder*, long tourist descriptions of various cities where she traveled and performed. The vast majority of these letters are simply copied verbatim from *Bradshaw’s Illustrated Handbook of Italy*. However, occasionally she would insert personal glimpses of her own experiences.

Writing from Rari, Italy on July 23, 1893 she described various sights in Sicily where she was enthralled with Mt. Etna, the volcano, which was erupting. She and Charlie along with at least one other woman traveled on donkeys “among the fields of ashes and lava” where in some places the “donkeys plunged knee deep” in the ashes.

The scene was the wildest and most singular. Around us for miles were nothing but ashes and smoke, above, below, to the right, to the left, all was black, bare and desolate. When we looked up

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there were also ashes extending for miles, crowning the summit with smoke and vapor, which every five minutes increased in thickness and a fresh volley to add to the heap.

Her description of the ascent is wonderfully clear and provides an image of the Little Georgia Magnet like no other.

The first 20 steps, after dismounting our donkeys told us very plainly it was impossible to climb that almost perpendicular ascent without help. In loose ashes we sank above our ankles at every step and slipped 1 1/2 back to every 2 we made forward. So we each engaged two men to help us. The first thing, was to gather up our dresses in front and tie them together with a handkerchief, making a loop of the two ends and slipping it over our wrists, then they placed in our hands a piece of stick, in the middle of which a rope was fastened which one man put over his shoulder and pulled us up, while the other man pushed us up. Even with this assistance it was the hardest work I ever undertook.

One cannot help but wonder if the man hauling her up the slope by the rope over his shoulder or the other man pushing from behind knew that they were lifting Annie Abbott, the Little Georgia Magnet, the woman who could not be lifted!

The physical struggle to gain the top clearly was significant as "every 20 or 30 minutes" Annie Abbott and the other ladies stopped "gasping for breath."

Several times we were near giving up the trip for the loss of breath and excessive thirst was too painful; but it looked really so short a distance that it seemed a pity to fail at last. So our men encouraged us, "Coraggio signoria," in Italian, our men would say, which means in English, "have courage, miss."

Triumphantly, she wrote,

We arrived at the Lava, the very Lava we saw days before glowing red hot, and then one more steep pull, with smoke and steam below and above, placed us panting on the edge of the mammoth crater.

Without commenting further on the view she was glad enough to reach our poor old donkey, again to take us full of ashes and dust, back to the city, and that night I was so tired that I found sleep impossible, but it was a journey I would not have missed taking for any amount.¹⁵²

The performances, and the touring, continued on through Sicily and back to Italy. She lost a diamond pin at Messina. In Reggio, Italy they spent two nights and had “poor business.” She noted that “the town is spoken of in the Bible was visited by St. Paul the apostle, then came up the straight through Messina to Reggio & Rome. Dead town nothing else of any interest.”

Foggia, Italy was a bad experience for her, calling it *a dirty thieving town. Had my trunk robbed of 2 diamond rings. Mr. A lost 1 stud & 2 shirts' studs with fine diamonds, my pearl pin with Roma on front. Maud's gold chain. Nearly a thousand Francs in money. 1 diamond with pin. 2 Venetian scarf pins 1 gold 2 silver. 1 watch chain gold & pin. Also diamond & pearl pin on pendulum to necklace.*

She stayed five days “in the dirty old town. Played 3 nights to no money. Will pass over the dirty place. Makes me heart sick.”

She left Foggia Monday August 8th for a two night return date at Rome. However, she also lost her “Romanian King

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medal," but she did not explain where or how the medal became lost.

Her bad luck continued with "poor business" in Corsica. In Pisa she had a bracelet made of "pound pieces" stolen. After viewing the leaning tower she had a "gold bangle bracelet stolen."

After Pisa they went to La Spezia, Italy. She "wrote to Mama. Sent Hattie a letter and a registered package of photos. A letter to Miss Lula McCombs.¹⁵³ She gave performances in Genoa to "very good houses."

At Alessandria, Italy she had good houses and good audiences. However, she also had a "severe headache." She wrote a letter to Hattie and one to Bill Haygood, who was Charles Haygood's (her first husband's) brother. She also had performances in "Assi" [Assisi?] and Turin, Italy. She traveled through "Nuella," Milan, and "Provici" arriving at Lake Como on September 13th, where she enjoyed sailing on the lake.

The Swiss mountain town of Lugano was "full of Americans." She went to church. The next stop was Lucerne where she stayed for two weeks engaged at "Theatre Kursaal doing a good business." She gave a "private séance before the Prince at National Hotel. 300 florins."

Apparently she bought gifts including
a pair of frames for eye glasses, a knife for cutting paper. Spoon and fork for salad, 2 spoons for honey, 1 salt, one cup with Lucerne engraved. 1 tooth pick, 1 book of Swiss costumes. 2 views stereoscopic, 3 Swiss aprons, 2 set of mats stamped. Sent a letter to Hattie, one to Mama. Mrs. Marshall Huly Wis [Hurley, Wisconsin], also a photo of myself to Maud and Fred, Sister Catherine & Dixie.

Zurich was a bit of a disappointment as "not rushing business for such a grand hotel." On they went to Basel, then to St. Gall and Bali where the performance must have been

very bad. There was a “full house Abbott cranky and left the stage. Got through alright.” Apparently some engagements cancelled. “Business ruined for all Switzerland by a nasty crank.” One wonders what happened to cause them to have to leave the country. They arrived in Paris on October 16th.

She visited the Eiffel Tower. “Went up in the lift to the top had a fine view of the city, wrote a postal to Mama and mailed it on the top. Mr. A wrote one to Fred. 1000 feet high 3 elevators. Greatest wonder of the world. Buffets, shops, post & telegraph & every convenience....”

October 27th she “bought some silk underwear, 2 dresses. Silk stockings, handkerchiefs.” The performances went well until the last one. “Packed houses till last.” Very oddly she “found my missing trunk, lost both trunks in Naples, Italy.”

A few days later she received a photo of Hattie, sent Lula McCombs an apron and “met the Surpentine [sic] Dancer. Had a pleasant time with her. Also Mr. & Mrs. Stanhope the famous Man of Colery.”¹⁵⁴ “Colery” was Annie Abbott’s term for cholera. Aubrey Stanhope was a widely known human test of the cholera inoculation.

Besides seeing Notre Dame, Annie Abbott inexplicably “visited the morgue saw 5 dead bodies.”

She performed at the Casino of Paris, including a matinee reserved just for families on November 10, 1892. Dr. Henri Goudard was among the 18-person committee and was asked to carry a chair by its legs. Mrs. Abbott barely touched it with a finger, but, by his own report, it was impossible for him to keep his balance and he was thrown onto the floor with the chair he was still carrying.

*I fell on the floor as if the wind had pushed me over. The sensation was similar to a sudden paralysis of my entire body. ... For almost all of the experiment, I had the same impression of powerlessness. The other people who were involved in the experiment shared this impression.*¹⁵⁵

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Dr. Goudard noted that in the exhibition to transmit strength to a child or to another person, Annie Abbott seemed to be in a hypnotic state herself and hypnotized a five-year-old girl who was introduced as the daughter of the "famous Loie Fuller, who was the Dancer that all Paris had the occasion to see." Fuller's daughter was then as difficult to carry or move as Annie Abbott herself. Those in the shows would sometimes get to know each other, and Loie Fuller and Annie Abbott exchanged photos of themselves.¹⁵⁶ Apparently Annie Abbott had befriended not only Loie Fuller, but her daughter.

Dr. Goudard was impressed by the exhibition and disagreed with studies by Mr. Oliver Lodge, a prominent scientist who described Annie Abbott's act as one of strength and muscular ability. After reviewing each segment of her program, Goudard concluded that she appeared as a psychic who used magnetic power. He did not see any deftness or muscular strength that could explain the phenomenon; Annie Abbott never appeared to make any such effort.

At this same time, Annie Abbott "met some Americans. Left Charlie with them to learn French." Annie Abbott and Mr. Abbott appeared to be taking a short breather without Charlie. There is little mention of performances and there are no further entries in the diary until November 16th when she "found my coin bracelet lost in Italy, & Mr. A had it, very pleased to find it." On November 21st, she left "Sunday night for Marseilles France, quaint old town." She visited the sights including the island of If and its Chateau. She toured the old prison. On November 28th she recorded at an unknown location "Crowded houses. Well pleased audiences." Her entries are very brief. December 1st she "met caddy [Buffalo Bill Cody] & family the famous Wild West cowboy shooter." On Friday December 2nd she left for Paris. She "spent Saturday at Grand Hotel night & Sunday with my friends where Charlie was staying," then left the next evening for St. Petersburg, Russia leaving Charlie with these friends. It is not every parent who will leave her six-year-old child in Paris with people she just met and then travel

to another country, such as Russia. But perhaps she wanted to be sure Russia was safe for him before taking him there.

Her first performance at St. Petersburg was Monday, December 12th where she had a “full house, good performance, nice reception.” The ensuing performances were well received. On December 19th she performed for “the Grand Dukes. Received a diamond brooch from the Prince of Oldenbourg.” She did little sightseeing as it was so cold. She was also having trouble with the “hard difficult language.” She found the Russians to be “peculiar people.” She gave “several private séances. Paid very well.”

On December 23rd she arrived in Moscow. It was 39 degrees below zero. On Christmas day she had “a warm reception” and was “quite sick with cold.” Charlie was still in Paris and she had apparently not written him as he was not listed when she mentioned others she had written.

On the 26th she had “one private séance. Have seen nothing of the town. Too bitter cold to go out. Am told a very fine town.” The following day she could “see some of it - windows on my way from Depot & to Theater. Papers good acclaim. Expecting Charlie from Paris.”

One has to wonder how Charlie managed to get from Paris to Russia. It seems inconceivable that a six-year-old boy would have been able to travel that distance, crossing borders, and dealing with foreign languages on his own. It must be said that Annie Abbott’s behavior continued to be unusual where her children were concerned.

The 1892 Diary comes to an end with a visit to Kiev. From entries in the autograph book it appears that they travelled to Constantinople, Malta, and Hamburg by July 1893. Annie Abbott claimed she arrived in New York on the steamer, *Arbina*, September 3, 1893. However the steamer and her arrival cannot be independently verified as there was no steamship named “*Arbina*” that the authors can find. It may be that she arrived from Liverpool on September 2nd, aboard the *Umbria*. In any case, Annie Abbott was back in Milledgeville

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on September 6th to visit her mother and presumably her other children, Maud and Fred.

Some time after she wrote the *Union Recorder* letter about her climb up Mt. Etna she wrote another letter in which she thanked the editor for publishing the Mt. Etna letter. This undated missive appeared in the *Union Recorder* on September 19, 1893. She enticed the readers by saying, "I hope the people of Milledgeville will not expect a description given by me to compare with the one given by Mark Twain of Jerusalem. If so, they will be disappointed. I will, later on, however, write up what I saw, and how I was impressed when I neared the Holy old City from the east side." The letter continued about her travels in Europe. She ended the letter with another teaser, "very soon I shall write up the Holy Land and my visit through the desert from 'Tillis' [Tiflis?] in Asia to Mount Calvary."¹⁵⁷

These statements do not make any sense. Her intentions may have been to go to the Holy Land, but she never did. It appears that her return to the United States was sudden. There are indications that she and Richard were having serious difficulties in the late summer of 1893. It is significant that Richard did not accompany her to Milledgeville and, instead, elected to travel to line up new engagements. His need to stay out on the road seems contrived.

In the article Charlie and Annie Abbott wrote in 1900, it was said that she performed for the Czar of Russia in St. Petersburg. There, Annie Abbott claimed to have seen in a dream the Czar killed in a railroad wreck. She sent Charlie with a note to the Czar about the dream and the Czar's trip was postponed. The article claimed that she was thereafter such a favorite of the Czar that "we could have stayed there the rest of our lives." If this were true it was not mentioned in her diary.¹⁵⁸

Charlie's fanciful account details how they went from Moscow to the Black Sea where they took a boat to Constantinople. There, the Turks and Armenians were battling and "the streets were full of dead people." Annie Abbott gave a performance for a Sultan who was not amused. He told their

manager, “Mr. Stein,” that Annie Abbott was a witch and was possessed by the devil. Although there is no supporting evidence, according to Charlie’s article they took a ship to Egypt. Going through the Suez Canal they supposedly went to Bombay [Mumbai], India and on to Calcutta, Australia, the Philippines and Hong Kong. They then visited Canton and Peking [Beijing], China. They then went to Japan from whence they sailed to Victoria, British Columbia, and traveled through Canada, then to California, and worked their way across the United States. Actually, none of this happened; after her Russian visit Annie Abbott sailed for home.

As it turned out, another Annie *May* Abbott, who performed similar feats, took such a trip in the late 1890s, but Dixie Haygood/Annie Abbott did not. Annie Abbott, in her 1900 article, incorporated the trip of Annie *May* Abbott into her own history. The close ties of Annie Abbott and Annie May Abbott will be explained in the coming chapters.

¹⁴⁵ The set was found in the possession of Ms. Loretta Lipsey, who inherited the set from her aunt and uncle who owned a Macon pawn shop.

¹⁴⁶ Dixie Haygood Diary.

¹⁴⁷ Dixie Haygood Diary.

¹⁴⁸ Dixie Haygood Diary; Charlie’s Story, *Washington Star*.

¹⁴⁹ Dixie Haygood Diary.

¹⁵⁰ Dixie Haygood Diary.

¹⁵¹ The story of Maud being in the convent with strict nuns was told to Colleen Dubbs, Maud’s granddaughter-in-law. The home is now part of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church at 746 College St., Macon, Georgia.

¹⁵² *Union Recorder*, 23 August 1892.

¹⁵³ Lula McComb Gause, 1860-1926, buried in Memory Hill Cemetery, Milledgeville, Ga.

¹⁵⁴ The serpentine dancer was Loie Fuller (1862-1928). A picture of Loie Fuller was found in Annie Abbott’s photograph album. Fuller was playing in Paris at the time at the Folies Bergeres. Fuller traveled at times with the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. A picture of Aubrey Stanhope in a white coat was found in Annie Abbott’s photograph album. Stanhope was a writer for the *New York Herald* whose fame at the time was because in the summer of 1892 he was one of the first human tests of a Cholera inoculation.

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¹⁵⁵ Henri, Goudard, “A Propos de Miss Abbott (Regarding Miss Abbott): The Little Georgia Magnet),” *Annales des Sciences Psychiques (Annals of Spiritual Sciences)* [in French], Jan-Feb, 1895, pp. 49-58.

¹⁵⁶ A picture of Loie Fuller was in Haygood’s photo album.

¹⁵⁷ *Union Recorder*, 19 September 1893. Dixie Haygood mentioned she “kept a diary for four years, and have taken notes of all the places of interest in my travels.” Regrettably, only the 1892 Diary has survived.

¹⁵⁸ Charlie’s Story, *Washington Star*; Annie Abbott Diary.

Chapter 9 - Annie Abbott Meets Sandow and Nellie Bly

Annie Abbott arrived in New York in September 1893. After an absence from Milledgeville of almost 3 years she hastened home to visit her mother, Eleanor H. Jarratt, and presumably see her daughter Maud and son Fred Haygood. The tour had been lucrative, or so Richard and Annie Abbott would have people believe. The jewels alone were reported to be worth \$60,000.¹⁵⁹ After such a long tour, she was to take a much-needed rest. It was reported that she still retained the beauty for which she was noted, but had added some foreign airs acquired by her associations abroad. She was to remain with her mother for a few weeks and then join her husband, who was booking a second tour in the U.S. and Canada.¹⁶⁰

Annie Abbott left on September 30 for Raleigh to begin her next tour. She toured through North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. However, the trip home brought to light troubles that were brewing, as the *Atlanta Constitution* reported:

The Little Georgia magnet, with her diamonds and jewels and gold, has shaken the dust of Milledgeville from her feet and has made a vow to the effect that hereafter Macon shall be her home. She even says that when people ask her where she was born she shall answer "Macon."

The little magnet is mad and her anger sweeps over the whole city of Milledgeville. She says that the people of Milledgeville do not appreciate one of their own, even though she has successfully conquered the crowned heads of the other world.

When she was here last she gave two entertainments, which netted her about \$500.

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Among those on the stage were two gentlemen, who proved much too much for the little woman, and she began crying foul and gave them a sound rebuke for what she termed ungentlemanly conduct, although one of them was the most prominent minister in the city, and the other was a prominent physician. The entertainments afforded immense amusement and the little woman sustained her reputation for moving everything in sight.

It was the next day, however, that she met her Jonah. A bailiff crawled upon one of her trunks at the Georgia road depot and her magnetic power failed utterly to bring him down. An attachment on her baggage was gotten out by George White for drayage on her trunks and piano to the amount of \$9.50 and Judge Bagley, who ambles about on such missions, was instructed to hold the baggage, which he did. Her husband had gone on to Macon and she only had money enough to pay her way there, having deposited the receipts of her entertainment here. The bailiff was obstinate, though, and he held the baggage back until she sent the money from Macon, which was done that night.

White has received a letter from the little woman, declaring that Milledgeville shall never have the honor in the future which her popularity has given in the past, and she further warns him 'to change his name and move to other parts' as she intends publishing him in The Clipper, New York World and other journals.

An attachment was also taken out by a physician here for her doctor's bill, and from all accounts it seems that the little magnet's visit to the

*spot of her nativity was flavored with the bitter as well as the sweets of life.*¹⁶¹

Another article followed the first by three days and included the following:

PAID A DEAD MAN.

Miss Dixie Haygood Paralyzed the Old Brickmaker

SHE SAID SHE HAD SETTLED THE BILL

The Little Georgia Magnet Stood the Living Collector Off, but Squared It with the Ghost

(Milledgeville, Ga., November 12) – The report in The Constitution about how the little Georgia magnet failed to hypnotize the bailiff has brought to light several other interesting stories about her stay here, one of which relates how she paralyzed Mr. J. W. McMillan, the jolly Scotch brickmaker.

Mr. McMillan had an account against her for brick bought at the death of her first husband. He had presented the account once, just after furnishing the brick, and being put off then had said nothing about it until she returned from England under the royal-sealed endorsement of the nobility there.

He was aware that she made great pretensions as to her powers over the spiritual world and fully understood that she could call up the dead and chat with them at will. In the conversation with her while here he was more thoroughly impressed with that fact than ever before.

Calling at the house in company with Mr. Ben Adams, his former bookkeeper, he presented his account and the little magnet quickly said:

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"Why, I have paid that long ago. I paid it to Mr. Yoel Joel."

"Aren't you mistaken about it, Mrs. Abbott?"

"No, indeed, and I saw him in Savannah last week and asked him specially about your account and he says he paid you."

"Probably you saw his brother or his son.," returned Mr. McMillan, who knew Joel had been dead nearly two years. [Yoel Joel died in March 1892.]

"No, I saw Yoel Joel and he told me that he had paid that bill."

Turning to Mr. Adams, the good-natured Scotchman said, "Come on Ben, that woman's power passeth understanding; she baffles the skill and strength of the living and makes the dead speak as she wants them to," and both gentlemen left the scene, more puzzled than ever before at the wonderful power of the little Georgia magnet.¹⁶²

Fortunes had begun to change. Within days, a report from Dawson, Georgia described a fight that occurred between Richard and Annie Abbott about the money resulting from the entertainments. Annie accused Richard of spending the money in the wrong way – on a woman in Atlanta. After some hot words, Richard, reportedly somewhat under the influence of whiskey, gave Annie Abbott some "stinging blows." Annie Abbott, enraged, vowed that she would never perform again under his management. The show went on that night, however, with Richard reportedly easy and gentle, and no one able to see that they had had a physical altercation so short a time before. When encouraged by the local people to go before the Randolph County grand jury and complain, Annie Abbott refused to testify against him.¹⁶³

Chapter 9 - Annie Abbott Meets Sandow and Nellie Bly

Within about a week -- in the first week of December -- Annie Abbott returned to visit her mother again, but left for more exhibitions in other parts of Georgia the following week.

By December 1893, Richard N. Abbey, the Mr. Abbott who had been with Annie Abbott (Dixie Haygood) as manager and husband for about 4 years, began a new act, with a new partner, whose name also was advertised as Annie Abbott, but who increasingly became known as Annie *May* Abbott.¹⁶⁴ Their first known performance was at the Newark, Ohio Opera House.¹⁶⁵

Meanwhile, the original Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood continued to perform without Richard Abbey in the first half of 1894. She traveled through Louisiana and Texas and back through Tennessee and Missouri. But from that point forward, there was a marked change in Annie Abbott's style. During this time, there was a change in the nature of the advertisements and newspaper articles about her. The advertisements gave more extensive descriptions of her act than in the past, and the act placed increasing emphasis on noises coming from her head and the scale test. In the scale test she was weighed before being lifted. After Annie Abbott stepped on the scales, the person reading the scales could not read her weight, as the weight varied from seventy pounds to over one hundred fifty pounds. The act continued as follows:

Dr. Townsend came forth to assist in the test. He was found to weigh 195 pounds. A board was placed over the scales. The doctor was told to place his bare hands on Mrs. Abbott's neck and then bear upon her with all his weight while she stood on the scales. He did so and the combined weight of the two was less than a hundred pounds. A man took Mrs. Abbott's place and then the weight was 280 pounds. Dr. Townsend climbed upon Mrs. Abbott's back while she was on the scales. The combined weight was 140 pounds. Now, how in the world can a woman who weighs

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ninety-eight pounds and a man who weighs 196 get on an ordinary pair of scales and weigh only 140 pounds? That's just what every one who saw the test wants to know.

*Then another man, who was also big and powerful, tried to lift Mrs. Abbott while she stood on the scales. He couldn't budge her, although he lifted hard enough to burst a blood vessel and did sacrifice several buttons. The more he lifted the more Mrs. Abbott weighed. With the man lifting at least 150 pounds the scales showed that Mrs. Abbott weighed 186 pounds. ... At least four skeptical men did the weighing.*¹⁶⁶

She included her children in the act, for Fred was described as follows: "Another wonder! Her 10-year-old boy can answer almost any question one asks him. He does not always answer at once. He may sit or walk awhile and then the answer usually comes. It comes often enough to make him a wonder."¹⁶⁷

Her way of life or Richard's leaving appeared to be taking a toll. The *Dallas Morning News* (February 26, 1894) reported

No man by looking at Miss Abbott would take her for a woman of supernatural form. She is very frail apparently and her face has the appearance of suffering. She is not a normal woman. She says her average temperature is 94 while her pulse averages from 110 to 169 per minute. Last night it was 140. Physicians are requested to examine her. Her education was very limited owing to delicate health during her youth. Yet her talks to the audience are plain and clear. The force she possesses is apart from mentality, which does not enter into her performances as a necessary element of power. Touching her health she is troubled with a pain which affects or has affected different parts

of her body. Last night and for some time past this aching or painful sensation was in the right side of her face which she kept covered by a piece of lace a few inches wide thrown around her head. She offered last night and makes a standing offer of \$10,000 to any physician who will cure her of her trouble.

While altering her temperature and heartbeat had been part of her act for years, her physical appearance seemed to be declining. Headaches or other sicknesses that she complained about in her diary seem to be an increasing concern to the point of using them in her publicity. Covering the right side of her face with lace was not a standard part of her stage persona.

Later in the year, she headed for the northeast, where she performed in Massachusetts, Maine, New Jersey, Philadelphia and New York. Meanwhile in the second half of 1894 and early 1895, Richard N. Abbey and Annie May Abbott traveled and performed in the Midwestern and western states, including Idaho, Nebraska, North Dakota, Illinois, and Washington.¹⁶⁸

It was in New York that once again Annie Abbott made headlines. The *New York Herald*, the paper claiming to have the largest circulation in the United States, with a circulation of 210,700 at the time, ran two long articles on September 20-21, 1894, in which a doctor named Thomas H. Bailey described Annie Abbott's unique power and his inability to explain it. Dr. Bailey had arranged for 50-60 members of the medical profession to view an exhibition at the Sturtevant House, a reasonably priced hotel formerly located at 1186 Broadway at the corner of Broadway and 29th Street. Mrs. Abbott was described as a tiny little woman, with a sunken face, but with big bright eyes. She looked anemic – "like a woman who lives on strong tea and keeps alive by sheer grit. There were fat diamonds in her hair and in rings on her fingers. She wore an evening dress, with pretty pink ostrich feathers hanging to it." She had her daughter with her, and at one point in the exhibition prevented a little boy who stood fifty feet from her

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from being lifted by a red bearded man. The writer described this as possibly being hypnotism.

Other parts of the exhibition included the battering ram style line of men against her, the scale test, and buzzing noises coming from her head through a glass held to her ears, for which she offered \$10,000 to anyone who could offer an



The Battering Ram.

explanation. The battering ram consisted of 15 to 18 men on the platform. Annie Abbott arranged them in a line, one man grasping the man in front by the coat collar, while the other hand was placed in the small of the back. Annie Abbott placed herself at the head of the line. Another man placed his hands under hers on the wall and said "Now, push me through the wall, if you can." The men would push and would "come down her like a line of football rushers, and it seemed that she must be driven clear through into the street. But the line collapsed like a jackknife. Mrs. Abbott scarcely budged." The man upon whom she placed her hands said he felt no pressure whatever.

It was reported that, during the evening, Dr. Bailey almost had a fight with a "cheap actor who wandered in from his house on the sidewalk and tried to break up the proceedings by yelling out every now and then 'which?'" While reported as "which?" in the newspaper, undoubtedly the correct word, "witch!," was lost on the reporter.¹⁶⁹

Sometime after the exhibition Dr. Bailey was summoned to attend her for an attack of severe pain in her head. He described the situation as follows:

Mrs. Abbott is afflicted with noises in her head as well as pains. By holding an ordinary wine glass to her head the noises are rendered audible

to others, sometimes, it is said, at a considerable distance.

... Mrs. Abbott explained that the noises in her head were transmitted through her arms. At first the noises resembled those heard in a sea shell, but were intercepted by what resembled miniature explosions, or the sound made by the drawing of a cork from a bottle, but greatly reduced.

Mrs. Abbott explained that at times the pains in her head are so acute that she faints, unless she can immediately obtain morphine.¹⁷⁰ She can account for the pains and noises in no way.

I attempted to lift her twelve-year-old daughter, a remarkably handsome child, clear of the floor, while she placed one hand on the child's back and another on my left wrist, but I found myself unable to move the girl, although I had previously easily lifted her clear of the ground when her mother was not touching her.

In the same way I was unable to lift Mrs. Abbott... When I took a different grip, however, and seized her around the waist, clasping my hands, I lifted her off her feet at once. Mrs. Abbott explained that the contact of my own hands had made her further efforts ineffectual.

... Her husband was a United States Revenue officer and was murdered by a "moonshiner" in Georgia, about five years ago, while in the performance of his duties. After his death, having three young children to provide for, she decided to turn her peculiar powers to account and she has succeeded in doing so, with much profit to herself.¹⁷¹

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

Two days after this series ran in the *New York Herald, The World*, boasting a world circulation of 487,421 per weekday, ran its own article, with the headline, "Abbott Bests Sandow. Strongest of Men Couldn't Lift a 98-Pound Woman When She Willed Otherwise." Noting that many thousands of people have been speculating for the past two days over Annie Abbott's remarkable exhibition at the Sturtevant House, *The World* arranged for Eugene Sandow, known as the world's strongest man, to attempt to lift her. The article explained in great detail the entire quickly-arranged encounter with Sandow. Annie Abbott had just returned from shopping after feeling ill. She wore a sailor hat with a veil, a shirt waist and a cloth skirt. On her feet were black suede slippers, which she wore when on the street. On her fingers were rings given her by titled people, and the diamond and ruby bracelet presented by the Prince of Wales. About her waist was the belt made of silver dollars presented by Count Mitza of Malta. Dr. Bailey happened in and observed the encounter.

Sandow easily lifted her when she stood upon carpet – to the point where she shot up into the air as if she had been shot from a cannon, and he caught her as she came down. But Annie Abbott explained that she could not work on carpet or metals or any good conductor. She had to be insulated. Once the bellboy brought in a simple pine board, approximately two feet by one foot, from the top of a box, Sandow could not budge her. Try as he might, she was immobile. He exclaimed, "I have lifted 5,830 pounds. When I tried to lift you from that board I put forth sufficient power to lift 1,200 pounds, that is enough to lift eight ordinary men. You don't weigh more than a hundred pounds and yet I couldn't stir you. I don't know what it is, but it is wonderful." To illustrate, Sandow lifted the 220-pound Dr. Bailey, who placed his foot in Sandow's hand, and with one hand Sandow placed Bailey on a table, 3 feet high, with no apparent effort.

Annie Abbott then performed the vertical pole experiment, and Sandow could not force it down from Annie Abbott's hands. Afterwards, Annie Abbott went to the

neighboring grocery store where she confused the scales, registering her weight at anything from 70 to 140 pounds. The encounter with Sandow was a highlight of her U.S. tour at this time, and she treasured the moment by placing a picture of Sandow in her photo album.

In a letter to the editor of *The World*, Sandow wrote:

The power possessed by Mrs. Abbott is weird and wonderful. I cannot explain it; I cannot theorize upon it. I can only accept it and leave it.

In the trial which I made in the parlor of the Sturtevant House to-day I put forth strength enough to lift eight men clear of the floor. Yet I failed to shift this little, fragile creature one inch from her position.

So with the attempt to drive her back or to force the stick to the floor, I exerted sufficient muscular force to induce free perspiration, but neither she nor the stick could be moved.

Whether this remarkable power is due to magnetism or whether it arises from some faculty for which no name has been found or which is yet unknown to science, it is impossible for me to tell. But from my own experience I should say that so far as Mrs. Abbott is concerned all human effort in the same direction would fail.

*Signed: Eugene Sandow*¹⁷²

On the same day, not to be outdone, the *New York Herald* carried a tongue-in-cheek article discussing various theories on how she did it. The theories included mesmerism, electricity, physical strength and magic. One claim was that she hypnotizes every one, casting a spell over them that makes them come out of the audience and give exhibitions. Another claimed it was done with electricity – “I felt a sort of current running through me when I tried to lift the youngster,” obviously referring to an attempt to lift a child. A physician

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

noted that "one cannot overcome the laws of gravitation" by changing weight by magnetism or electricity and suggested that "Mrs. Abbott has such extraordinary strength that she can hold the boy down with her little finger against the efforts of the strongest man. You'll notice that when she resists the efforts of any one to lift her she assumes the attitude of physical resistance, bending her body as if for an effort and setting her teeth." The article noted that in all the exercises the strong men were made to apply their strength while in "inconvenient postures." One theatrical person asked "Why wasn't Hermann the magician invited? He'd show how it's done in about two minutes."¹⁷³

Two days later, *The World* rocked the world by announcing the secret to Annie Abbott's strength had been found and that her performance was "poppycock and tommyrot!"¹⁷⁴ A strong editor placed his hands beneath her arms, and she put her left hand upon his right wrist and her right hand upon his neck, her fingers slipping inside of his starched collar – "to get the flesh contact which gives me my power and makes it impossible for me to be lifted," she explained. After Annie Abbott was unable to be lifted, Nellie Bly, a noted reporter, asked Annie Abbott to make her unliftable. Annie Abbott protested that she was too large and the effect would not be very significant, but Bly persisted saying her 120 pounds should be no challenge for the strong men present. To prove it, the editor lifted Bly easily. Annie Abbott then placed Bly and the editor in position, placed her left hand on Bly's right hand and her right hand upon the back of Bly's neck, with the result that the editor could not lift Bly. Bly asked Annie Abbott to make a boy unliftable, and this Annie Abbott did by placing her left hand on the boy's hand, but her right hand was slipped under his coat on his back, a trifle above the shoulder blades.¹⁷⁵

Bly who was determined to identify the force, later tried the exhibition with the boy, and was successful. She explained it as "I merely press down on his back and wrist; it is a slight force I use, still it is more powerful than all the strength you

can exert in lifting.” She then folded her arms at the elbows, with her hands touching her shoulders and asked the men to pick her up by her elbows. The men failed. She explained that:

If they held my arms down firmly against my sides they could lift me by them, but when I expand my elbows, so forcing the lifters to use their strength against each other, I, of course stand like a stone.

To be lifted by one man requires the use of a board. Then one need only to stand with one foot upon the board and one foot on the floor against the board, or it can be done with the heels even if the heels be of the French style and curved. Then by assuming the position of the left hand upon the lifter’s left hand, the right upon his neck, brace the foot tight against the board, and he will never lift the person¹⁷⁶

Nellie Bly wrote that “the whole thing is that of placing one’s self in such a position that a man uses his force against himself.

After we all knew the secret we went back to Mrs. Abbott. We did not tell her we had found her out, but I told her I wanted to see her feet while someone lifted her.

She could not refuse, so her manager held up her skirts while she was lifted, and lifted she was four times out of four trials.¹⁷⁷

While one may have thought that the exposé would end Annie Abbott’s career, *The Constitution* suggested that the Sandow experiment was a great advertisement for her, and that the Bly exposé was even more so.¹⁷⁸ An ad appeared in the *New York Times* for Annie Abbott the Georgia Magnet to play at Koster & Bial’s, a well-known music hall.¹⁷⁹

Annie Abbott, “The Little Georgia Magnet”

Yet the exposure by Bly may have had an effect, for sometime later it was noted that in 1894, James Hyslop, a professor of Columbia University and debunker of spiritualism, “climbed upon the stage in Koster & Bial’s and exposed the fraudulent pretences of Annie Abbott, the so-called Georgia magnetic girl, and drove her back into the obscurity from which she had emerged.”¹⁸⁰ However, despite this claim Annie Abbott continued to perform and was far from obscurity in 1894.

¹⁵⁹ *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun* (Columbus, Ga.), 12 September 1893.

¹⁶⁰ “Mrs. Annie Abbott,” *Union-Recorder*, 12 September 1893.

¹⁶¹ “She Met Her Match,” *The Constitution* (Atlanta), 10 November 1893, p. 3.

¹⁶² “Paid a Dead Man,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 13 November 1893, p. 2, col. 2.

¹⁶³ “Around in Georgia,” *Columbus Daily Enquirer-Sun*, 24 November 1893, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Annie May Abbott’s name was reported as Alta Tilley in a newspaper article in 1904; the real name is Tillie Tatro, perhaps confused in reporter’s notes during an interview or intentionally given incorrectly. The name was identified through genealogical research of the authors and is based on her obituary of the *Times Record* of Troy, NY, 1 February 1955 and other corroborating evidence.

¹⁶⁵ *Daily Advocate* (Newark, OH), 18 December 1893.

¹⁶⁶ *The World* (New York), 21 September 1894, p. 1, col. 3.

¹⁶⁷ “Annie’s Wee Finger,” *Dallas Morning News Historical Archive*, 26 February 1894.

¹⁶⁸ For example, Annie May Abbott and R. N. Abbey of Georgia arrived at the Capitol Hotel in Boise, Idaho on Aug. 28, 1894 and played at the Columbia Theater on Aug. 29, per *Idaho Daily Statesman*, 28, 29 August 1894.

¹⁶⁹ “She Mystified Doctors, Mrs. Annie Abbott Gives an Exhibition of Her Power Before a Party of Physicians,” *New York Herald*, 21 September 1894, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ In the 19th century, morphine was considered much like aspirin is today. It could be easily obtained either by prescription or over-the-counter. There were countless patent medicines on the market containing morphine. See “The Consumers Union Report on Licit and Illicit Drugs,” by Edward M. Brecher and the Editors of Consumer Reports Magazine, Schaffer Library of Drug Policy, 1972, retrieved on 27 December 27 2008 from

<http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/Library/studies/cu/cu1.html> for more information.

¹⁷¹ “Is a Human Conundrum, Mrs. Abbott is Light, but Can Make Herself so Heavy a Strong Man Can’t Lift Her,” *New York Herald*, 20 September 1894, p. 9.

¹⁷² *The World*, 23 September 1894, p. 1.

¹⁷³ *New York Herald*, 23 September 1894, p. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Nellie Bly, “Bly is a Magnet, too. She Can Do the Lifting Trick Even Better than Mrs. Annie Abbott,” *The World*, 25 September 1894, p. 8.

¹⁷⁵ There are some elements of this newspaper report that are inconsistent with the standard Annie Abbott description. For example, one account reported she wore a thick veil and had blue eyes, despite previous descriptions that her eyes were dark. There is also an unusual account of her writing backwards because of a broken right arm several years prior. However, the timeframe, Annie Abbott’s known touring on the east coast at that time as reflected in the autograph album, her husband described as a United States Revenue officer murdered by a “moonshiner” in Georgia, having three young children to provide for, and accounts of children in the act all provide evidence that this Annie Abbott was Dixie Haygood.

¹⁷⁶ “Nellie Bly and Dixie Haygood. Nellie Says the Little Georgia Magnet is a Great Big Fake and Says She Proved it,” *The Weekly Telegraph* (Macon), 8 October 1894; “The Georgia Woman. Nellie Bly Says Mrs. Abbott, the Magnet, is a Fake,” *The Constitution* (Atlanta), 28 September 1894, p.10.

¹⁷⁷ Nellie Bly, “Bly is a Magnet, too. She Can Do the Lifting Trick Even Better than Mrs. Annie Abbott,” *The World*, 25 September 1894, p. 8.

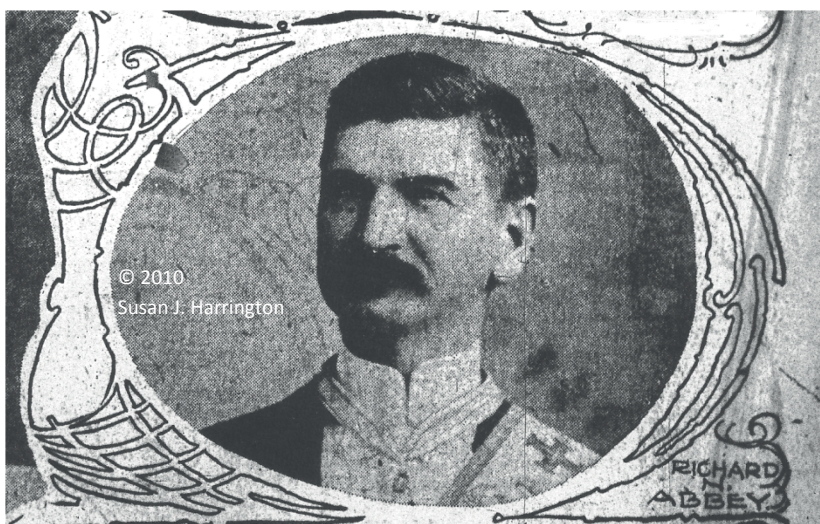
¹⁷⁸ *The Constitution*, (Atlanta), 30 September 1894, p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ New York Times, Koster & Bial’s ad, 27 September 1894 through 13 October 1894.

¹⁸⁰ The Psychological Society and Mrs. Piper,” *The Constitution* (Atlanta), 22 November 1902, p. 4.

Chapter 10 - Annie *May* Abbott, Richard N. Abbey's Second "Little Georgia Magnet"

While the original Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood was resuming her exhibitions on her own, Richard N. Abbey joined with Annie May Abbott starting at the end of 1893, immediately after he broke with Annie Abbott following their famous European tour. Annie May Abbott was born in 1872 in New York¹⁸¹ as Matilda (Tillie) Tatro and was the daughter of French Canadian parents. She was young enough to be Richard's daughter. In fact, Richard was a married man, married to Fannie Dora Snowden on June 20, 1872 and had 4 children between 1872 and 1888. Richard had obviously left his wife and 4 children to go on the road with Annie Abbott as her husband and manager during her European tour. Just as Richard had managed Annie Abbott, he began successfully managing Annie May Abbott.



Richard N. Abbey as pictured in a 1902 newspaper article.

Chapter 10 - Annie May Abbott,
Richard N. Abbey's Second "Little Georgia Magnet"

Richard and Annie May usually benefited from the afterglow of Annie Abbott's reputation, but sometimes there was a downside that had to be dealt with, such as in Mexico, Missouri, where the negative press associated with Annie Abbott had to be refuted:

Mexico, Mo. Feb 13, 1895. – A few weeks ago Annie May Abbott, the magnetic woman, so-called, appeared at the opera house here. Two ministers were on the stage testing her powers, and the audience was composed of many of those who do not usually attend the theater. The next day President A. K. Yancey took Mrs. Abbott to Hardin college. The ensuing Sabbath the Methodist ministers attacked her sharply and disapproved of their congregations attending such performances. One minister, who has a state-wide reputation, said "It was the strangest thing in the world that people would believe in the miracles she performed, yet would not believe in the miracles in the Bible!"

Shortly after the woman's departure from Mexico the Ledger clipped an article from a St. Louis paper taken from New York World, written by Nellie Bly, exposing the feats of Mrs. Annie Abbott and stating that she was wanted in that state. Yesterday the editor of the Ledger received a long telegram [from Richard and Annie May Abbott] from Streator, Ill., denouncing the reprint story, declaring that there were two Abbott women and threatening to sue the editor and prosecute him for criminal libel. The Ledger published the telegram verbatim et literatim and appended a paragraph denying intent to libel or misrepresent.¹⁸²

Richard N. Abbey and Annie May Abbott toured in the west, through Idaho, Washington, Nebraska, North Dakota,

Annie Abbott, “The Little Georgia Magnet”

Missouri and Illinois, in an obvious attempt to increase Annie May Abbott’s skills and avoid conflicts with memories or engagements of the original Annie Abbott. Eventually they traveled in August, 1895 to Hawaii from San Francisco. The *Hawaiian Gazette* reported:

*The Alameda brought another young lady, well known in public life – Annie May Abbott. She is known as the “Georgia Magnet” and has traveled all over the world, giving exhibitions of the wonderful power possessed by her. Miss Abbott will remain in this city until the arrival of the next China steamer. She may appear in public before she departs.*¹⁸³

She did appear in public, and Annie May followed the traditional act of pushing around men attempting to hold onto a chair, preventing men from forcing a stick to the floor, tumbling men to the floor who were piled on top of each other on a chair, and setting up fifteen children in a circle who could not be lifted. But there was one unique aspect:



Annie May Abbott as pictured in a 1902 newspaper article.

The entertainment was prefaced by Miss Abbott rendering a pathetic recitation from a favorite operatic author, which received merited

*applause and showed clever elocutionary powers.*¹⁸⁴

In January 1896, it was reported:

Miss Annie May Abbott, the Georgia girl, whose prodigious feats of strength created such a sensation in this country a few years ago, and gave her the name of "The Electric Magnet," is now in China after having made a tour of Japan. In the latter country the strongest of the wrestlers were unable to lift her little body from the floor, or even push her over... .

The Japanese scientists, however, repudiated the electrical theory which Miss Abbott's manager usually suggests to the newspapers, and attributed her remarkable feats to hypnotic powers, claiming that it was the force of her will instead of the strength of her muscles that interfered with the action of those who were engaged in the experiments.

In China she is creating an even greater sensation, and the native scholars accuse her of receiving aid from superhuman agencies. Such a feeling has been excited among the literati that it is feared it may have an unfortunate effect in stimulating anti-foreign and anti-missionary prejudices. Chou Han, an educated Chinaman, writes to a Shanghai paper, asking: "... The Chinese will certainly conclude that if foreigners practice this mystic power to make money, they will do so for the far higher object of gaining converts and saving souls. Natives who have witnessed Miss Abbott's powers will never be persuaded to believe that among missionaries there are not both men

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

*and women who possess the same power of rendering others subject to their will."*¹⁸⁵

After Japan and China, the act went to India, Burma, Ceylon, Egypt and various parts of Africa. Then it was on to England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Greece and other countries. Finally leaving Europe, she and Richard went to New Zealand (in 1899-1900), where she met with good success but was eventually criticized and exposed. It was reported that:

The Timaru Morning Post is very severe on "Georgia Magnet." In a leading article yesterday, it asserts that "beyond cleverly managed tricks, the Georgia Magnet possesses no power, psychic or otherwise, that is not possessed by every member of her sex." As an example. The "Georgia Magnet" holds the downward end of a stick in her clenched right hand, and one or two men are expected to force it through. Why, almost a child could resist their efforts. We know it is claimed that she does not grasp the stick, but we have seen her do it. Every one of her tricks is explainable in as simple a manner,

*It is unlikely the Magnet will attract much more in New Zealand; as all the papers are busy exposing her tricks.*¹⁸⁶

Like all magnetic girls before her, Annie May was facing the self-promoting attacks of the newspapers and exposers. So in 1900 Annie May Abbott and Richard Abbey went to Australia, where she played extended engagements in all of the larger towns.¹⁸⁷

Of her performance at the Bijou Theatre, in Melbourne, Australia, Charles Waller wrote:

She may have been the original Annie May Abbott: I have never been sure of that point.

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Richard N. Abbey's Second "Little Georgia Magnet"

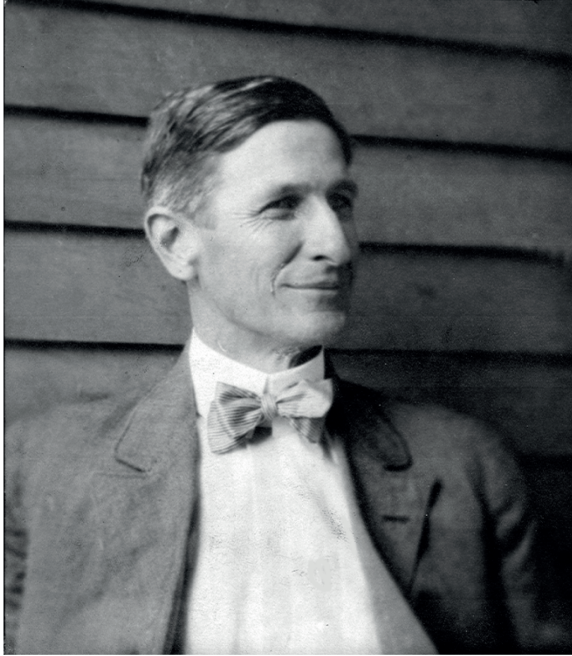
There was a girl of that name, who was once famous with this Georgia Magnet business.

Her husband, who did the lecturing, referred to her as "this frail little lady." She was certainly not that; but a sturdy young woman, who looked quite capable of cleaning up her plate when meal time came.. .

*The efforts of the men were simply dissipated in air. In some cases they were actually working against each other. There was also the decent man's disinclination to being rough with a woman. Nevertheless, I once saw a powerful man of the labouring class waltz this Annie May Abbott right around the stage. He had no respect for either physics or femininity!*¹⁸⁸

It was in about 1900 in Australia that Theodore H. Abbey became involved.¹⁸⁹ Richard's younger brother, Theodore H. Abbey, was born August 1, 1867 in Water Valley, Mississippi. Theodore and his father moved to Atlanta and on February 26, 1889, Theodore married Jessie May Harris,¹⁹⁰ had a daughter Lucile (born 1891) and a son Theodore (born 1894),¹⁹¹ and was trying rather unsuccessfully to scrape together a living in Atlanta followed by a dental practice in Donaldson, Louisiana. In a letter Theodore wrote to his son in 1931, he explained:

About this time and while in Donaldson, I received a letter from Richard enclosing \$750, stating that he had a wonderful opening for me to do his advance work with an attractive picture of a large amount of money I would be able to make; that he was unable to secure a man upon whom he could rely. I "could either use the money to come to him or return it." You may imagine the desperate state of mind which prompted me forthwith to start upon this precarious mission.



**Theodore H. Abbey, age about 33.
(Courtesy of Leonard B. Abbey)**

I discovered soon after arriving in Australia that he had only just arrived in Australia from South Africa, and the glowing picture painted in his letter to me was based upon his experience in the latter country. I soon discovered that sufficient funds could not be spared to admit of my sending enough money home to keep things going; they themselves were practically broke by the time I had been there a month or so.

I was near the Port of Brisbane – somewhere in the interior – I learned of a boat, immediately, (the next some three weeks later). I had with me just sufficient money for a second class passage to Vancouver, and by close calculation barely enough money from there to Atlanta counting, no extras,

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Richard N. Abbey's Second "Little Georgia Magnet"

meals, etc; I wired then that I was taking French leave, feeling fully justified in the light of his miscalculations and my emergency at home.

*... I was fortunate enough upon my return through the generosity of W. E. Treadwell and S. W. Carson to get going in the real estate business; without funds of my own the going was hard and heartbreaking, but I managed to make some money for them and they stayed with me. After a time success seemed assured; then a temporary lull precipitated a flood of obligations which seemed destined to engulf me.*¹⁹²

It may have been that the attempt to take the Annie May Abbott act to Australia was too soon after another magnetic girl act had been there. Charles N. and Martha Steen (who had helped the original Annie Abbott get started in the Steen Abbott Novelty Co in 1891) performed "the Georgia Magnet" act with a person named Miss Rose Howard at the St. George's Hall in Melbourne, Australia in 1893,¹⁹³ and another "Georgia Magnet" appeared as part of "The Calculating Boy Company" in 1896.¹⁹⁴

Richard and Annie May came home sometime after Theodore, leaving Melbourne after March 1902 and arriving in June 1902, and moved in with Theodore at 508 Capitol Ave., Atlanta.¹⁹⁵ In a large spread with pictures in the *Atlanta Constitution* they claimed that stage life was a thing of the past and they were trying to avoid publicity. They painted themselves in the press as possessed of gracious manners and Richard as a Mason who in 1895 took his first degree in Bombay, India and since that time had risen to a thirty-third degree Mason, showing a growing Masonic record as they traveled across India, Scotland, South Africa, and Australia.

But trouble was brewing. Theodore continued his letter with this description:

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At this juncture Richard and Annie appeared upon the scene. They took turns telling me their separate grievances. Hers to the effect that they had just been married in San Francisco under her protest in order to meet the folks in Atlanta decently; that the matter was "a joke to her, etc;," and I believe it will be recalled by those who met her at that time that she treated it as such.

So Richard and Annie May were married in 1902, with Annie May being about 20 years younger than Richard. Less than a year later, on January 4, 1903, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported:

Dr. Theodore H. Abbey, a well known dentist, who lives with his wife at No. 651 South Preyer street, was arrested and locked up at police headquarters at 11 o'clock last night on complaint of his brother, who charged him with alienating his wife's affections.

R. N. Abbey, a brother of the accused man, caused the arrest last night. He charged that his brother had been guilty of improper conduct and that he had been the cause of estranging him from his wife.

Dr. Abbey, when seen by a reporter for The Constitution at the station house shortly after his arrest, denied the charge against him and stated that his arrest had been caused by his brother through insane jealousy. ...

"This is a very unpleasant affair," said Dr. Abbey, "and I regret very much that it has reached this conclusion.

"Some time ago my brother and his wife had some domestic trouble. For a time they did not speak and she appeared to be greatly distressed.

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She came to me and told me that she was anxious to leave her husband.

"Mrs. Abbey asked me to furnish her with the means to return to her parents' home. I did as she requested, and that is what has caused this trouble."

*All of the ... friends of Dr. Abbey who called at the police station stated that his arrest had been caused through spite.*¹⁹⁶

In his retrospective letter to his son, Theodore wrote concerning this time in his life: "I do not recall that I ever sought women, but was by no means as diligent in avoiding them as circumspection would demand." Theodore was released from custody by signing an agreement that he would have no further relations with his brother's wife.

The agreement was accepted by Richard, after which the arrest warrant was dismissed. Meanwhile Mrs. Richard N. Abbey (Annie May Abbott) had returned to her home in Albany, New York.¹⁹⁷

On July 10, 1900 a son had been born to Theodore and Jessie Abbey, but died soon after on June 9, 1901. It was probably about this time that Theodore joined Richard and Annie in Australia, for he was not with the family in the 1900 census when it was taken on June 7, 1900. However, he was back by early 1902, because on November 29, 1902, Jessie gave birth to a son, Leonard B. Abbey.¹⁹⁸

Yet Theodore did not stay with Jessie and could not stay away from Annie May. Theodore was having a difficult time making money, whether because of the bad press in Atlanta or for other reasons. Reflecting later on the situation as it stood in 1903, he wrote to his son about his efforts to earn a living:

I got into communication with a concern in Cleveland -- went there to see them, made one trip through the southwest; failed completely to make good. Annie wrote me that she had secured an

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

engagement for a tour in vaudeville at \$150. a week but would be unable to manage the show alone. The idea was revolting to me (I hadn't much of an opinion of the game) but it seemed to offer immediate relief from a desperate situation and I joined her.

Theodore joined Annie May and they borrowed liberally from the original Annie Abbott's previous publicity:

*Miss Annie May Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet," ... weighs but 103 pounds but "she will take hold of a ten year old child and the strongest man in Statesville can not lift the child." "She has," we are told, "puzzled the scientific world" with remarkable feats in which no muscular strength is used. Sandow, the noted strong man, could not lift her off the floor and he stated that he was unable to explain her power.*¹⁹⁹

¹⁸¹ New York State Census 1875, Saratoga County. Federal Census 1880.

¹⁸² "Anne May Abbott Wrathful. The *Mexico Ledger* Threatened With Libel Proceedings – The Town Stirred Up." *The Kansas City Star*. 13 February 1895.

¹⁸³ "Interesting Stage Career," *Hawaiian Gazette*, 2 August 1895.

¹⁸⁴ "She is a Wonderful Woman. Annie May Abbott Mystifies a Large Audience Last Night," *Hawaiian Gazette*, 9 August 1895, p. 5.

¹⁸⁵ "Miss Abbott – 'Electric Magnet.' How She Is Mystifying the Inhabitants of the Orient," *The Washington Post*, 25 January 1896, p. 7.

¹⁸⁶ "General News," *Waimate Daily Advertiser* (New Zealand), Vol. II, Issue 93, 9 January 1900, p. 2.

¹⁸⁷ Sidney Ormond, "Annie May Abbott Returns Home After Surprising Nations of the World," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 July 1902, p. 31, col 1; "General News," *Waimate Daily Advertiser* (New Zealand), 6 January 1900, Vol. II, Issue 92, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ *Magical Nights At the Theatre*, Melbourne, Australia: Gerald Taylor Productions, 1980, pp. 107-108.

¹⁸⁹ 1900 Census, Barnesville, Pike County, Georgia shows Theodore's wife, mother-in-law and children living with David and Marian Reid; Marian Reid appears to be Jessie May Harris' sister.

¹⁹⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, 27 February 1889.

Chapter 10 - Annie May Abbott,
Richard N. Abbey's Second "Little Georgia Magnet"

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- ¹⁹¹ 1900 Census, Barnesville, Pike County, Georgia.
- ¹⁹² This letter was supplied to the authors by Theodore H. Abbey's grandson, Leonard B. Abbey of Atlanta, Ga.
- ¹⁹³ Waller, Charles. *Magical Nights at the Theatre*. Gerald Taylor Productions: Melbourne, Australia, 1980; *Evening Post*, 9 May 1903, Vol. LXV, Issue 109, p. 3.
- ¹⁹⁴ *The Evening Post* ad and articles, New Zealand, 28 Aug 1896 – Sept 1896, in a communication from Tony Wolf, September 2007.
- ¹⁹⁵ "Annie May Abbott Returns Home After Surprising Nations of the World" by Sidney Ormond. *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 July 1902, p. 31, col. 1; *Evening Post* (Australia), 15 March 1902, Vol. LXIII, Issue 64, p. 3.
- ¹⁹⁶ "Serious Charge Made By Brother, Dr. T. H. Abbey Arrested on Complaint of R. W. (sic) Abbey," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 4 January 1903, p. 4, col. 4.
- ¹⁹⁷ "Abbey Released on Agreement," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 5 January 1903, p. 1, col. 6.
- ¹⁹⁸ 1910 Census of Atlanta Ward 6, Fulton Co, Ga; Cleveland Abbe and Mary Josephine Genung Nichols, *The Abbe-Abbey Genealogy*, New Haven, Conn., The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Company, 1916, p. 127 or found at http://www.archive.org/stream/abbeabbeygenealo00abbe/abbeabbeygenealo00abbe_djvu.txt retrieved 31 December 2008.
- ¹⁹⁹ *Landmark* (Statesville, NC), 13 November 1903.

Chapter 11 - The Original Annie Abbott's Family Problems

In 1895, problems began to mount for the original Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood. Shortly after the Nellie Bly incident, William R. Peters, Annie Abbott's manager, obtained a judgment against her for \$521 for his services as a manager.²⁰⁰ He had been hired in October but was dismissed without being paid. Annie Abbott moved to New Jersey, seemingly to avoid the judgment but after having her money in New York enjoined, returned to New York and claimed she had not received the summons.²⁰¹ The judge ordered both parties to appear before a referee to ascertain whether the summons was duly served and whether Annie Abbott was perjuring herself. The hearing lasted for five days. When Mrs. Roden of 99 Union Avenue, who had an unpaid board bill, was testifying, Annie Abbott fell to the floor in a faint and was not revived until an injection of morphine was made by the attorneys.²⁰²

The referee decided against her, whereupon she returned to New Jersey. She later sent an affidavit that the enjoined money belonged to her daughter.²⁰³

During the hearing John C. Hearne, a young Englishman from Liverpool, surprised everyone by announcing that he and Annie Abbott had been married November 11th.²⁰⁴ After the hearings, the pair was reported spending their honeymoon in Philadelphia, where she was undergoing treatment for an illness that rendered her at times unconscious and caused her to fall to the floor. She offered \$10,000 to any physician who would drive "that mysterious force that has enabled her to coin dollars all over the world, but which is now making life a burden to her."²⁰⁵

Chapter 11 - The Original Annie Abbott's Family Problems

On July 13, 1895, it was reported, "that Mrs. Abbott was ... married to a very wealthy Philadelphian and that she would give up her performances, ... and for a time Mrs. Abbott disappeared from public view. She reappeared Thursday, however, and from the story she tells it appears that her husband was not wealthy, as he was represented to be, and that the marriage has been anything but a happy one."²⁰⁶ While Annie Abbott may not have felt well due to mysterious forces, another reason surfaced, for John C. Hearne and Annie Abbott had a five-week-old son.

The New York Morning Journal gave the following story:

While the clerk at Bellevue hospital was entering early cases yesterday morning a slender, nervous-looking woman, with a five-weeks-old baby in her arms entered.

"My child is poisoned," she said. "Something must be done for him at once."

The woman was Mrs. Annie Hearn [sic], who until recently had lived with her husband, J. C. Hearn [sic], at No. 235 East Twenty-seventh street. She left him, she says, because he refused to support her, and then he vowed vengeance.

On Tuesday evening, according to her statement, she had taken the baby out and left it in charge of her daughter, a girl of twelve, while she went into a drug store.

While she was away, she says, her daughter told her that her husband appeared, raised the baby's head, opened its mouth and rubbed a white powder inside. Some of the powder had fallen on the baby's neck, and she took it to a nearby drug store and found that it was morphine.

"My husband spent a fortune that he got from me," she said. "A thousand dollars in a week was nothing for him to spend. He pawned a \$600

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

diamond pin, but the people were afraid and would only give \$20 on it, and I was able to redeem it."

At Bellevue hospital last night Dr. Brauwick said the baby was only suffering from cholera infantum.²⁰⁷ If poison had been administered the child had swallowed none of it.²⁰⁸

While morphine use was quite common in the 19th century, including as a soothing syrup for babies who were teething, the last two decades started to see increased questioning of the use of morphine.²⁰⁹ Annie Abbott's alarm at straight morphine applied to the baby's lips may have been manufactured or a realization and sincere concern that morphine would harm the child. Meanwhile one can also envision a father who was only trying to help a sick child by administering a readily accepted medicine.

At this point both the baby and John C. Hearne seem to disappear from recorded history.

Near the end of the tumultuous year of 1895, Annie Abbott returned to Macon to settle her life once again. She settled in Macon at 261 Orange Street for a time²¹⁰ and even performed at the Academy of Music in December of 1895. But it was not long before she felt compelled to go back on the road. By April, 1896, she was touring Tennessee, South Carolina, and North Carolina and advertised herself not only as the "Little Georgia Magnet" but also as the "Little Woman of Mystery."²¹¹

In Columbia, South Carolina, she was met with eagerness and the headline "Annie Abbott Coming."²¹² She was clearly now expanding her advertisements to healing, for a testimonial appeared in the paper prior to her first performance:

I was one of the 15 gentlemen who acted on her committee, and was so deaf that I could not hear one word the little woman said. After a struggle of 10 minutes to find out what she wanted me to do, I became disgusted and turned to walk

Chapter 11 - The Original Annie Abbott's Family Problems

away, when some one in the audience said "He is deaf."

"Well," said the little woman, "I will fix him so he can hear me and you, too."

*She asked me to be seated. She placed her electric hands over my ears, that since my childhood's days had not heard a sound, and, to the surprise of all present, in a few minutes I could hear everything said. Outside of her electric powers, her performance is most wonderful. No one should fail to see this wonder worker of miracles while they have an opportunity. My case was not the only one she healed, but many were made happy by her wonderful touch. Signed by S. C. Ticjar, Lebanon, Tenn.*²¹³

Ads proclaimed "The lame, the sick, the deaf and others, suffering from headache, neuralgia, rheumatism, or any kind of disease – all are invited to come (before the performance begins) and be treated and cured free of charge. Don't suffer when you can be cured in a few minutes."²¹⁴ Other newspaper articles stated upon her arrival in Columbia that she had helped several sufferers and had driven severe rheumatic pains from one sufferer.²¹⁵ Other attractions presented at the time included her \$8000 gown, which she claimed won first prize at a Paris exposition and which was presented to her by three granddaughters of Queen Victoria. Also displayed were jewels and souvenirs. On the front of her bodice were medals and on her arms were bracelets.²¹⁶

To a good audience, Annie Abbott announced a final performance in Columbia, with the intent of giving a farewell tour of the south, followed by another trip to Europe.²¹⁷ She began in North Carolina, where she also hired a manager, Will Gray²¹⁸, but the tour or arrangement did not last, for by July 21, 1896, *The State* (Columbia, South Carolina) announced,

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"



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**Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood with medals received
on her tours. (Courtesy of Constance Bohannon)**

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“Annie Abbott Returns: She comes to make Columbia her future home,” where she intended to start a first-class bakery and ice cream parlor for her son, Fred, although the bakery was to be run by Mr. Frank Scheidemann, formerly a chef at the Grand Central hotel.²¹⁹ The bakery would open in August and was to be called the Annie Abbott Bakery.²²⁰

It appeared the intent was to get Fred set up in a business so that she could leave for another tour. She intended to play the towns between Columbia and New York, then go to Germany “where she is so popular.” She also hired Mr. J. C. C. Levy as advance agent.²²¹

Then misfortune struck. Incredibly, and ironically, Mr. Levy was struck by lightning while on tour in North Carolina, but managed to recover.²²² Then Mrs. Frank Scheidemann, wife of the Abbott bakery manager, and her newborn baby died.²²³ Within two days of her death, Annie Abbott was selling some curiosities and works of art given during her European tour.²²⁴ She lost a pocketbook containing \$56. Annie Abbott thanked but offered no reward to the finder.²²⁵ A fire at or near the Annie Abbott bakery resulted in two live wires left on the sidewalk, that, when joined resulted in a big flash and would have been fatal had someone held both ends simultaneously.²²⁶ A week later, the bakery was sold as “the result of legal proceedings.”²²⁷ Clearly financial problems loomed over Annie Abbott and her bakery.

Then Millie Washington, described as a black woman, was charged with taking papers, jewels, and medals valued at \$5,000 from Annie Abbott.²²⁸ On December 10, 1896 the court refused to offer Washington a reduction in bail from \$1,000 to \$300,²²⁹ suggesting that the crime was one of some magnitude.

In the midst of these hard times came an event that would mystify the descendants of Annie Abbott for over one hundred years but, in light of her obvious financial difficulties, can be explained. As Annie Abbott's (Dixie Haygood's) daughter, Maud Haygood Smith Eisenback neared the end of her life, she confided to her granddaughter-in-law, Colleen Dubbs, that

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Annie Abbott had married Maud off. It was a forced wedding. Indeed, the announcement came on September 25, 1896: "Mrs. Abbott's Daughter Weds. She Became Mrs. A. B. DeSaussure Last Evening – A Home Marriage."²³⁰ Maud was only 16 and, in her old age, she remembered her age as 14 and the marriage as "before she was a woman" or mature. The wedding between Alexander Baron DeSaussure and Maud Haygood was a quiet one, with few invited guests. The bride and groom were described as both young and popular and were to make their home in Columbia.

Three months later, the marriage had gone bad. The paper announced: "To the Public: I will pay no debts made by Mrs. A. B. DeSaussure, Jr. – signed A. B. DeSaussure."²³¹ Annie Abbott, in her effort to relieve her financial burdens, especially now that the bakery project had failed, married off Maud to a young man who she thought would be able to financially support Maud, and perhaps herself. However, it did not work out as planned.

Not long after, Maud left town in secret with Alex Smith,²³² a traveling sewing machine salesman from Sandersville, Georgia. Family legend has it that Smith first courted Annie Abbott, who was close to his age, but ran off with Maud. Smith was already married to Lee Kirkwood Smith and had a family with three daughters in Sandersville. According to family legend, Maud and Smith left town in the middle of the night and traveled to Louisville, Kentucky. Smith, whose full name was Walter Alexander Smith, had previously used the name Alex Smith but now called himself Walter Smith in an obvious attempt to disguise his whereabouts. In Louisville, Maud delivered her first child, Sadie Maggie, on March 4, 1898. Smith's wife and three daughters waited in Sandersville for three years for his return. He never did. Eventually Walter Smith's wife and daughters moved to Florida when no word of his whereabouts was forthcoming.

In 1908, Maud and Walter Smith moved from Kentucky to Montana, where they raised produce on 40 acres. Walter

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Smith died in 1935, and afterwards Maud married a man who had been their neighbor in Louisville, and she became Mrs. Maud Eisenback. The two of them lived in Simms, Montana, where she died in 1956. It is believed that Maud and Annie Abbott never reestablished contact after Maud disappeared that night in 1897. As recalled by her grandchildren, Maud Haygood Smith Eisenback was not a warm person, was sometimes described as “mean,” and never spoke about her famous mother until almost the end of her life when she told Colleen Dubbs, her granddaughter-in-law, stories about her mother and herself, which have been verified by the authors and included in this narrative.

Annie Abbott's health and happenings continued to be of interest to the Columbia, South Carolina community, for the paper reported a knife fight in front of her house where two young white men were cut with pocket knives (April 19, 1897), a fainting spell as she rode her bicycle (February 20, 1897), and a bout of la grippe (flu) (April 2, 1897).²³³

Among these minor events, a startling headline appeared: “ROBBED HIS MOTHER: Mrs. Annie Abbott's Son Takes Her Diamonds and Jewelry.”²³⁴ Annie Abbott reported the crime to the police, stating that a \$500 diamond ring, some loose diamonds, several valuable watches with jewels and other jewelry were gone. She also noted that James Current, alias James Clark, had been working at the house the previous day and that Fred had not been seen since the crime. The detectives soon found both Current and Haygood, arrested them and recovered nearly all of the jewels, including watch chains that Current had taken from someone else. When the detectives brought the two to court, Annie Abbott threw her arms around Fred's neck and wept, exclaiming, “Oh, Fred, how could you do your mother so?” and then fainted. After the hearing, both Current and Fred went to jail to await trial.²³⁵ The *Augusta Chronicle*²³⁶ noted that “Unlike most such affairs of this sort, this is a genuine story and is not gotten out by her advertising agents, for as far as is known she does not have such assistance.”

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

Though it is true that Annie Abbott employed no advertising agents at the time, she could be seen in occasional local performances, including one at the opera house in Augusta.²³⁷

Another curious incident happened in August 1898, when Annie Abbott was arrested for abducting Leila Thomas, a 9-year-old, who lived near her in Columbia.²³⁸ She vehemently denied the charge, and when her trial came to the court schedule in October, the solicitor did not press the charge.²³⁹

So ended a tumultuous time for Annie Abbott (a.k.a. Dixie Haygood), Fred and Maud in Columbia, South Carolina. Soon Annie Abbott would leave Columbia. Her life was about to take yet another strange twist.

²⁰⁰ "Business Troubles," *New York Times*, 29 November 1894, p. 11.

²⁰¹ "How Will It End?" *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 February 1895, p. 3.

²⁰² "Annie Abbott in Trouble. The Little Georgia Magnet Charged with Perjury in New York," *The Weekly Telegraph* (Macon), 7 February 1895.

²⁰³ *The Weekly Telegraph* (Macon), 7 February 1895

²⁰⁴ *The Weekly Telegraph* (Macon), 7 February 1895.

²⁰⁵ "Magnetised an Englishman. Annie Abbott the Georgia Wonder Has New Husband." *Union-Recorder*, 4 December 1894 (date line 30 November 1894 Philadelphia); "How Will It End?" *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 February 1895, p. 3.

²⁰⁶ "A Magnet's Woes. The 'Georgia Magnet' Makes a Charge Against Her Husband." *The Atlanta Constitution*, 13 July 1895.

²⁰⁷ Cholera infantum: an acute noncontagious intestinal disturbance of infants formerly common in congested areas of high humidity and temperature but now rare, per *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, retrieved 27 December 2008 from <http://medical.merriam-webster.com/medical/cholera%20infantum>.

²⁰⁸ As reported in "A Magnet's Woes. The 'Georgia Magnet' Makes a Charge Against Her Husband." *The Atlanta Constitution*, 13 July 1895.

²⁰⁹ See "Dangerous Drug Bottles," Digger Odell Publications 2005, retrieved on 27 December 2008 from <http://www.bottlebooks.com/dangerou.htm>; also, "The Consumers Union Report on Licit and Illicit Drugs," by Edward M. Brecher and the Editors of *Consumer Reports Magazine*, Schaffer Library of Drug Policy, 1972 retrieved on 27 December 2008 from <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/Library/studies/cu/cu1.html>.

²¹⁰ She was listed under "Annie Abbott" in the 1896 Macon City Directory.

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- ²¹¹ "Annie Abbott Coming," *The State*, (Columbia, SC), 24 May 1896; "At the Theatre: 'The Little Woman of Mystery' on Thursday Night – Worth Seeing," *The State*, (Columbia, SC), 31 June 1896.
- ²¹² *The State* (Columbia, SC), 24 May 1896.
- ²¹³ "At the Theatre: 'The Little Woman of Mystery' on Thursday Night – Worth Seeing," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 31 June 1896.
- ²¹⁴ Advertisement: "Opera House Monday June 8, Miss Annie Abbott, The Little Woman of Mystery," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, 7 June 1896.
- ²¹⁵ "Added by Annie Abbott: The Little Woman of Mystery Puzzles," *The State*, (Columbia, SC), 5 June 1896, p. 8, col. 1.
- ²¹⁶ "What is it? The mysterious power of Miss Annie Abbott," *The State*, (Columbia, SC), 6 June 1896.
- ²¹⁷ "Miss Abbott's Farewell," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 7 June. 1896.
- ²¹⁸ "Manager Gray No. 2," *Daily Charlotte Observer*, 16 June 1896.
- ²¹⁹ "Annie Abbott Returns: She comes to make Columbia her future home," *The State* (Columbia, SC) 22 July 1896; "Miss Abbott's Bakery," *The State* (Columbia, SC) 30 July 1896.
- ²²⁰ "In operation at last," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 11 August 1896; "Lost – A Black Eagle Medal," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 19 August 1896.
- ²²¹ "Miss Abbott's Tour," *The State* (Columbia, SC) 10 August 1896; "Miss Abbott's Tour," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 25 August 1896.
- ²²² *The State* (Columbia, SC), 25 Aug. 1896.
- ²²³ "Death of Mrs. Scheidemann," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 2 Sep. 1896.
- ²²⁴ "Advertisement: For Sale – Miss Annie Abbott," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 4 September 1896.
- ²²⁵ *The State* (Columbia, SC), 15 September 1896.
- ²²⁶ "A Live Wire," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 16 November 1896.
- ²²⁷ "The Bakery Sold," *The State* (Columbia, SC) 22 November 1896.
- ²²⁸ "Annie Abbott," *National Police Gazette*, Vol. LXIX 26 December 1896: p. 2.
- ²²⁹ "Asked for a Reduction," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 10 December 1896.
- ²³⁰ "Mrs. Abbott's Daughter Weds. She Became Mrs. A. B. DeSaussure Last Evening – A Home Marriage," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 25 September 1896.
- ²³¹ "To the Public," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 18 December 1896.
- ²³² Walter Alexander Smith was born Mar 27, 1864 and died Nov 30, 1935. He was the son of Alexander Smith and Adaline Duggan Gilmore Smith and brother of Thomas Warthen Smith 1869-1927 and Mollie I. Smith 1865-1887. The three daughters left behind were named Mary, Bessie and Louise.
- ²³³ "Fainted on Her Bicycle," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 20 February 1897; *The State* (Columbia, SC), 2 April 1897; "A Cutting Scrape," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 19 April 1897.

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²³⁴ "ROBBED HIS MOTHER: Mrs. Annie Abbott's Son Takes Her Diamonds and Jewelry," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 25 November 1897: p. 1.

²³⁵ *The State* (Columbia, SC), 25 November 1897: p. 1.

²³⁶ *Augusta Chronicle*, 25 November 1897, p. 1.

²³⁷ *Augusta Chronicle*; 8 May 1898, p. 1, col. 4.

²³⁸ "Charged With Abduction," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 17 August 1898.

²³⁹ "Annie Abbott, Abduction," *The State* (Columbia, SC), 18 October 1898.

Chapter 12 - The Annie Abbotts and Their Managers Collide

The year 1899 marked another turning point in the original Annie Abbott's life. In that year, Annie Abbott met and married a man named Frank C. Baylor, left Columbia, and moved to New Jersey.²⁴⁰ Baylor was a veteran of the Spanish American War serving from Jun. 27, 1898 to April 30, 1899.²⁴¹ In the 1900 census, he was listed as an insurance agent in Warren County, New Jersey. He was born in 1873²⁴² and so was Annie Abbott's junior by about 13 years. It appeared that Annie Abbott may have kept her true age from him or the census taker, for in the 1900 census, she claimed she was 31 and born December 1868 [actual date 1860].²⁴³

Also in 1899, on October 8, her son Fred Haygood married Mattie Potter²⁴⁴ and began living in Macon, Georgia.

In December 1899, Annie Abbott's mother, Eleanor H. Jarratt, who was living with her son, Albert G. "Dock" Jarratt on First Street in Macon,²⁴⁵ passed away and Annie Abbott returned home for the funeral and her mother's burial in Memory Hill Cemetery in Milledgeville, Georgia. After the funeral, Fred may have traveled with her back to New Jersey, as he appeared in the household of the Bayers in New Jersey during the 1900 census, despite recently marrying Mattie. He also appeared in the 1900 census of Macon, with Mattie, his mother-in-law, Elizabeth (Lizzie) Potter, and Lizzie's brother, Charles Childess²⁴⁶. By that time, Fred was working in the cotton mill as a twister. He and Mattie would remain in Macon, working for the cotton mill and raising a family.

Life seemed to settle down for Annie Abbott Baylor and her family. Her son Charles Nathaniel Haygood [formerly referred to as Charlie, now called Charley²⁴⁷] took a job in the *Washington* (New Jersey) *Star* newspaper office. In December

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

1900, he wrote a lengthy and charming article on the life and travels of his mother and himself, particularly in 1891-1893 when they toured through England and Europe. It is assumed that most of the material came from Annie Abbott herself, since Charley was but five when the events took place. Much of this article has been incorporated in previous chapters. As he was Annie Abbott's only child who traveled with her during this time, there were a number of insights that only he could provide. Much of his story followed the outline of Annie Abbott's autograph album, but just as Annie May Abbott had borrowed from the original Annie Abbott's performance history in her publicity and ads, Charley and Annie Abbott borrowed from Annie May Abbott's and Richard Abbey's travels to Australia and China. There are no entries in her autograph album, nor are there gaps in her life, that indicate she traveled to these countries.

While 1900 was a seemingly calm year, 1901 was quite different, for just weeks after the publication of Charley's story in the *Washington Star*, the *Star* reported that the 14-year-old was quite ill. He died March 30, 1901 and was brought back to Milledgeville for burial. The front page announcement of the *Washington Star* read:

Death resulted from heart disease and anaemia on Saturday at about 5 p.m. after an illness of several weeks, but which only became serious about ten days prior to his demise.

Charley Haygood or, as he was more familiarly known, Charley Baylor, came to work in the Star office late in November of last year and it is no exaggeration to say that he was one of the brightest boys the office has ever had. His courteous manners, his gentlemanly bearing and the fact that he was a youth of exemplary habits won for him at once a place in the hearts of all the force. ...

The boy had traveled all over the world, and though those travels began as a babe, his marvelous memory was a storehouse of strange experiences in many climes. Unlike other boys, he was backward about telling his story and it was only when pressed that he could be induced to describe what he had seen and heard in far away lands. A detailed account of his travels, largely his own work, appeared in the Christmas Star [newspaper]. ...

Only a few days before his death a lady who lives in the neighborhood and who had taken a kindly interest in the little fellow asked him if he was trusting in Jesus. "Why yes," he replied, "who else is there to trust in?" ...

The remains were taken to the old home in Georgia where today they will be laid beside those of his father... . The mother and stepfather accompanied the remains on the long journey.²⁴⁸

One can imagine the sadness that loomed over Annie Abbott as her dear young son and traveling companion was laid to rest, but his passing was not the end of her child-raising, for she was already pregnant. At nearly the age of 40 and only about six months after Charley's death, she gave birth to twins, Harold Avery Baylor and Helen M. Baylor, on October 4, 1901. For three years she and Frank raised the children, and it appeared that her career on the stage was over for good.

But in January, 1904, ads for an Annie Abbott in her "first appearance in New York vaudeville," at the Circle theater on Broadway, appeared.²⁴⁹ It may have been in this way that Annie Abbott Baylor / Dixie Haygood became aware that Annie May Abbott was on the road, using her name and her act. It may have been too much to sit at home and watch their success. The call to the stage was stronger than the call to

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

motherhood, and Annie Abbott Baylor was determined to leave. According to Baylor family legend, "Annie wanted to go on the road."²⁵⁰

Annie Abbott Baylor (Dixie Haygood) came out of retirement and returned to the stage in spectacular fashion. Headlines appeared in the New York newspapers, where Annie Abbott Baylor declared that not only was she herself the inventor of the "act," but that the Annie Abbott who was playing at a local theatre stole her jewels worth \$12,000. She claimed that she had been chasing this Annie May Abbott and her manager all over the world for four years. When she attended the performance and Manager Abbott called for volunteers, Annie Abbott Baylor went on the stage with the intention of exposing her enemy, but Manager Abbott recognized her and rejected her.

Three days later, Annie Abbott Baylor, the original Annie Abbott, had a warrant served on Annie May Abbott and Theodore Abbey. Annie May and Theodore were subsequently jailed for a few hours, delaying their performance that evening. On January 31, 1904, the *New York Times* reported:

With "The Georgia Magnet" one of the headlines of his programme locked in the West Sixty-eighth Street Police Station, Percy Williams, manager of the Circle Theatre, spent several hours last evening racing about the city in a cab trying to find Magistrate Mayo, that he might furnish bail for Annie M. Abbott, who gives the act. She and her manager, Theodore H. Abbott, were arrested at the close of the performance in the afternoon on a charge of the larceny of \$10,000 made by a woman who says she is the original "Georgia Magnet," and that the prisoners have stolen her title, act, costumes, and jewelry.

The complainant is Mrs. F. C. Bayler [sic], wife of a grocer of Waterbury, Conn., who declares

that she is the original Annie Abbott. Both the prisoners denied that they knew Mrs. Bayler [sic].

The act known as "The Georgia Magnet" is an exhibition in which the woman who does it prevents, or at least makes the public believe that she prevents, any one from lifting or exerting physical strength over her in any way by the use of some mysterious power.

Mrs. Bayler [sic] said last night that in 1890 she went to Europe, where she says she gave her act before many crowned heads. Among her souvenirs of this tour she says are a decoration of the Order of the Black Eagle, given her on May 5, 1892, by the Emperor of Germany; a silver set from the Bishop of Manchester, a bracelet given her by King Edward, then the Prince of Wales, with two shamrocks of diamonds and rubies and engraved "Albert Edward to Annie Abbott," and a ring from the Rajah of Bombay. This last ring, she declared, she recognized as one worn by the woman who has been giving the act at the Circle this week.

In May, 1893, Mrs. Bayler [sic], or Annie Abbott, as she says she called herself then returned to America and went to her home in Macon. She continued giving her act throughout this country for two years, she says, but in May, 1895, she encountered the man and woman whom she had arrested yesterday. She says that she engaged the man as her manager, and they made a tour of Europe. They quarreled, and on their return here, she says, he stole her valuables and obliged her to

return penniless to her relatives, and taught the other woman the secret of her performance.

*Mr. Williams succeeded in furnishing bail for his "Magnet," and after five hours in a cell she reached the theatre in time to go through the act. She declared that the ring which Mrs. Bayler [sic] said she recognized was given to her by the Czar of Russia.*²⁵¹



FEB 1 1904—
**FAIR RIVALS WAGE A
MERRY WAR OVER
\$12,000 GEMS.**

Annie May Abbott as pictured in an article about her confrontation with Annie Abbott Baylor.

Annie Abbott Baylor had come face-to-face with Annie May Abbott, for whom Richard N. Abbey had left her in 1893. However, ten years had passed which may account for Annie Abbott Baylor confusing some dates and mistaking Richard N. Abbey's younger brother, Theodore H. Abbey for Richard, as the two were remarkably similar in appearance. Richard N. and Annie May Abbott's stage career had moved on, just as Annie Abbott's life had, and the two careers had now collided when Annie Abbott Baylor saw them and wanted to go

back on the road herself.

A flaw in Annie Abbott Baylor's claim was that she had mistaken Theodore for Richard, and, as reported in the *Atlanta Constitution*, eventually the charge was dismissed:

"Magnet" Freed of Theft Charge

*Dr. T. H. Abbey Is Now on Trial in New York
He is charged by Annie Bayler [sic] with
Having Stolen \$100 in Cash and Several Thousand
Dollars Worth of Jewelry*

*The Fact that Dr. Theodore H. Abbey and
Annie May Abbott, better known as "The Georgia
Magnet" are about to be freed of the charge of
stealing money and jewelry from Annie Bayler in
New York, will be of interest in Atlanta.*

*Dr. Abbey, it will be remembered, was once
arrested in this city charged with alienating the
affections of "the Magnet," his brother's wife. His
arrest on the charge of appropriating cash and
diamonds dishonestly has brought him again into
the public eye of Atlanta.*

*The following telegram in regard to the case
was received last night:*

New York, February 4 (Special)

*In the hearing on the case of Dr. Theodore H.
Abbey, of Atlanta, accused by Annie Bayler of 429
West Fifty-first Street, of taking from her \$100 in
cash and \$6,100 worth of jewelry on October 16,
1901, which was held in the Westside police court
today, several witnesses were brought forward by
the accused, who swore he was in Atlanta on the
day the alleged robbery is said to have occurred.*

Dr. Abbey, besides being a physician, is the

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manager of Annie May Abbott, an actress, well known as the "Georgia Magnet." She also was arrested in the case, but proved she was in Australia on October 16, 1901, and was discharged by Magistrate Barlow.

Dr. Abbey's case was adjourned until next Wednesday, \$1000 bail being continued. Miss Baylor testified that the accused had been her manager from 1892 to 1895, and during that time she alleged he had taken from her, at various times, jewels in different amounts, ranging from \$1000 to \$10,000 - most of these she had recovered.

She said that once, while in London, she had had Dr. Abbey arrested. Dr. Abbey produced Dr. R. Bell, of 8 West Seventy-first street, and Louis B. Austin, of 307 West Twenty fourth street, a lawyer, both of whom swore they knew he had been in Atlanta on the date of the alleged robbery. Dr. Abbey contended that the complainant had mistaken him for his brother, who is also a theatrical manager. He did not know where his brother was.²⁵²

After their encounter in early 1904 and the conclusion of the court case, Annie Abbott Baylor, Annie May Abbott, and Theodore H. Abbey were disentangled of any further legal proceedings. Annie May Abbott went on the road again with Theodore H. Abbey. Annie Abbott Baylor, drawn back to the stage after leaving Frank Baylor and her twin three-year-olds behind, resumed her career as the "Little Georgia Magnet."

Left with his and the original Annie Abbott's two three-year-olds, Frank Baylor did what he could. Helen Baylor was given to her aunt and uncle, Marvin B. and Mamie H. Gifford, to raise. Later Helen married Wilbur Wright in 1920, raised a family, lived in Morris, New York and died in 1986, seemingly never encountering her birth mother again after Annie Abbott

Chapter 12 - The Annie Abbotts and Their Managers Collide

left to go on the road. Frank Baylor continued to raise Harold, married Nellie E. Soules in 1908, and had another son named Carl. Frank Baylor, Annie Abbott's husband, died in 1935 and was buried in Chenango Valley Cemetery, Binghamton, New York. Harold, Annie Abbott's son, married Anna Pagley, raised a family in Binghamton, and died in 1979.²⁵³ Harold and Helen, the original Annie Abbott's (Dixie Haygood's) children, died never knowing the true identity or fame of their birth mother.

²⁴⁰ Charley's story and the Columbia (SC) City Directory describe Annie Abbott, as widow of Haygood, living in the city. The obituary of Annie Abbott's mother, Eleanor Clopton Jarratt, shows that Annie Abbott returned from New Jersey for her mother's funeral 12 December 1899.

²⁴¹ His gravestone, registration card, and Indiana Spanish American War Records.

²⁴² 1880 and 1900 censuses, Warren County, NJ; gravestone in Lot 209, Section 3, Chenango Valley Cemetery, Binghamton, NY.

²⁴³ Other alterations to actual facts reported to the census included Fred, who was there at the time of the census, born March 1884 (actual date 1883), and Charles, born Feb. 1888 (actual 1886). In addition a daughter of Frank Baylor is shown as Louise Baylor, born August 1896, but her parents' birthplace (New York) matches neither Frank's nor Annie Abbott's birthplaces. In addition, Annie Abbott stated that she had had 5 children but only 2 were living (presumably Fred and Charles). At this point, Maud and the child with John C. Hearne were gone and thereafter treated as "dead." The 5 children can be accounted for as (1) Hattie, her first born in Texas who died in 1880, (2) Maud, (3) Fred, (4) Charles Jr., and (5) infant of John C. Hearne and Annie Abbott. The identity of Louise Baylor remains a mystery.

²⁴⁴ Bibb County, Ga. marriage records.

²⁴⁵ Macon City Directory.

²⁴⁶ The death certificate of Mattie Potter Haygood, Bibb County, May 27, 1887, shows her mother's maiden name as Elizabeth Childless. Census spellings could be interpreted as Childless or Childers.

²⁴⁷ This is a change in spelling from the previous spelling of Charlie used in her diary.

²⁴⁸ "Star Boy's Travels Over," *Washington Star*, 4 April 1901, p. 1.

²⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 24 January 1904, p. 17.

²⁵⁰ Source: Conversation with Frank P. Baylor, son of Harold Avery Baylor, 16 August 2004, who identified his grandmother as Annie Abbott and

Annie Abbott, “The Little Georgia Magnet”

who understood that “Annie wanted to go on the road,” hence ending the marriage.

²⁵¹ *New York Times*, 31 January 1904, p. 5, col. 1.

²⁵² “‘Magnet’ Freed of Theft Charge. Dr. T. H. Abbey is Now on Trial in New York,” *The (Atlanta) Constitution*, 4 February 1904.

²⁵³ Delaware County, NY marriage records, Book 1 p. 434, 1908; 1920 census for Morris, Otsego Co., NY; 1920 census for Binghamton, Broome Co., NY; Social Security Death Index for Helen Wright; Obituary Helen M. Wright, *The Daily Star*, Oneonta, NY, 11 June 1986; Obituary for Harold Avery Baylor, *Binghamton Evening Press*, February 5, 1979; Obituary for Frank C. Baylor, *Binghamton Press*, 22 February 1935; Gravestone of Frank C. Baylor, Chenango Valley Cemetery, 120 Nowlan Rd, Binghamton NY: Lot 208, Section 3.

Chapter 13 - The Annie Abbotts Go Their Separate Ways

The original Annie Abbott (a.k.a. Dixie Haygood and Mrs. Frank C. Baylor) toured the west for over 2-1/2 years stopping at places like Toledo, Chicago, Colorado, Montana, Washington state, and Nebraska.²⁵⁴ Despite the fact that she was not as young or attractive as she once was, she achieved



Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood
in 1904.

some success. In fact, the *Oakland* (California) *Tribune*, in reviewing her upcoming shows in June 1905, wrote that the Bell playhouse in Oakland *has procured one of the greatest features and one of the highest salaried acts in vaudeville. Miss Annie Abbott, the little Georgia magnet, who has created a sensation throughout the country in wonderful feats of magnetism, opens her one week's engagement at this theater next Monday... . This little*

*lady in herself would be considered by managers as a show, but in conjunction with her will appear ... [list of other performers].*²⁵⁵

A week later the *Tribune* wrote:

Annie Abbott, the Georgia magnet and an excellent bill of high class vaudeville, had the

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

*tendency of crowding this popular play house to the doors at every performance this week. Miss Abbott's exhibition is certainly a remarkable one.*²⁵⁶

However, she did obtain some unwanted publicity in Los Angeles:

Annie Abbott, "the original Little Georgia Magnet," is in trouble on account of some diamonds which she says were presented to her by H.R.H. [His Royal Highness] Albert Edward, in 1894. ...

She is now holding forth nightly at the Empire Theater on East Third street.

Miss Abbott says she defies all laws of gravitation, but last night she gravitated in to Deputy Sheriff Goodhue, who swooped down upon her as she left the stage after she had put the kibash on half a dozen men in tests of strength.

Radiant in a diamond necklace and sunburst, the "Georgia Wonder" swept from the stage and walked right into the arms of the law in the wings.

Goodhue wanted those diamonds for the account of Herbert Joseph & Co., jewelers, of Chicago, who claim that a balance of something like \$700 is still due them and that the "little magnet" is trying to defraud her creditors.

...Goodhue merely served notice of suit upon Miss Abbott last night and didn't get the sparklers. The fight will come up in one of the justice courts today.

Miss Abbott says the whole affair is a mistake and that she has been made the victim of another woman who has nearly the same name. This woman is Anna Emma Abbott, who also claims to

Chapter 13 - The Annie Abbotts Go Their Separate Ways

be a human magnet and who is now doing strength stunts in San Francisco theater. At the time the alleged debt was contracted the Los Angeles Annie Abbott says she was in Australia and that she knew nothing of any such transaction.

“Why, the then Prince of Wales, who is now King Edward of England, gave me these diamonds,” said the little woman last night. “I performed in London soon after I discovered my wonderful power and the Prince presented me with this sunburst. That other woman who affects my name and pretends to imitate my acts has contracted this bill if there is one.”²⁵⁷

Of note is that the picture accompanying this article is clearly the original Annie Abbott (Dixie Haygood) and she had been in Chicago in June of 1904²⁵⁸ and had never been to Australia. She had picked up the story of Annie May Abbott and was using it as her own, much like Annie May Abbott and the Abbey brothers had used hers.

About this time, her son Fred Haygood made the headlines of the *Macon Telegraph* with a plea to the mayor to help in the search for his mother who he feared may have been a victim of the great San Francisco earthquake of April 18, 1906 and the subsequent fire.²⁵⁹ She had written Fred that she was on her farewell tour of the world and had portions of only Canada and the U.S. to tour before its conclusion. Her latest letters, from Canada and Seattle, Washington, stated she was leaving for San Francisco to fill a two weeks' engagement and that she would be staying at The Palace Hotel. The Palace Hotel was destroyed by the earthquake. Fred and her lawyers, who were managing her Georgia property, had not gotten a response to their inquiries.

The plea obtained results, for Macon mayor Bridges Smith sought information from the mayor of San Francisco and the San Francisco theaters.²⁶⁰ Fred was said to have “entertained the greatest fears that his mother, the world

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

famous 'Little Georgia Magnet' met death under the avalanches of debris during the earthquake" or was overcome by the subsequent fire.

Annie Abbott was never in danger, for she had not yet left Seattle and so missed the earthquake. But it was not long before a lesser crisis befell her there. She claimed that her gown of satin and lace created by the famous dress designer, Charles Frederick Worth, had been ruined by the Queen City Dye works. The gown, she claimed, had been given to her by King Edward VII when he was Prince of Wales, and that it had won first prize at the World's fair in Paris in 1889. She sued the Queen City Dye works for \$5,000 in damages after the silk was burned, the lace torn, and the dress exposed to the sun in a dusty, dirty window.²⁶¹

About this time Annie Abbott may have had a guilty conscience over her estranged children or started using a variety of peculiar publicity stunts to get attention. In Idaho, headlines read, "Foster Mother Loses Children. Case Against Mrs. Annie Abbott is Dismissed and Homes Found for M'Dougal Girls."²⁶² Annie Abbott had been charged with taking two children from their mother. In the testimony, she claimed she found the two children in destitute circumstances in Boise and obtained the consent of the mother to take them with her. She stated that she did not use them in her work but intended on taking them to her home in Georgia to be brought up with her other foster children [this was false as there is no evidence that she had other foster children]. During the few weeks she had the two children, she had gotten them new clothes worth about \$75. The judge gave the children to two other homes and dismissed the charges against Annie Abbott.

Later, the incident was used in Nebraska for publicity: "Miss Abbott's 'Weakness' For Helping Orphans; She'd Sell Her Rings":

"She'd sell her rings if we didn't watch her," said a friend who is always with her. "She just cannot keep money. She gives 50 per cent of her earnings to help run two orphan asylums in

Chapter 13 - The Annie Abbotts Go Their Separate Ways

Georgia, and she is always picking up a stray waif or two in every town and adopting them."

Miss Abbott has a tender heart for children. A ragged and unhappy child has the first chance at her purse. She has raised six children adopted from orphan asylums and picked up from the streets, homeless and hungry, and educated them. Her black eyes soften and gleam when she speaks of these little ones in her charge and she looks yearningly at the rings she wears on every finger.

*"They were given to me by famous people," she says, "or I would turn them into money for my orphans. Food and clothes do them lots more good than these diamonds do me. Let me show you some letters from my children that are worth more than jewels or the appreciation of crowned heads to me. See they love me, these dear little ones and I love them, and while I have a dollar half of it goes to my orphans."*²⁶³

It is important to note Annie Abbott's whereabouts at this time, for Annie Abbotts and Georgia Magnets were common. For example, in Fort Wayne,²⁶⁴ one appeared who gained publicity by fighting with her manager, with whom she had more than cordial relations, but whose name was Anna Abbott and who had a little poodle dog. An Annie Abbott & Co. offered a short play entitled "Juanita" in Trenton, New Jersey, using the well-known name of Annie Abbott but deviating greatly from the original act.²⁶⁵

An Annie May Abbott of Cartersville (Ga.) appeared in Atlanta in 1908 at the Orpheum who did not resemble either the original Annie Abbott or Annie May Abbott.²⁶⁶ Other Annie Abbotts appeared off and on into the 1920s.

Among these several Annie Abbott appearances were Annie May Abbott and Theodore H. Abbey. They appeared at Chase's in Washington in 1904 and again in April 1905 as

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

clean, family entertainment: i.e., "no attraction in polite vaudeville has drawn greater or more interested audiences."²⁶⁷

Others on the bill with them at Chase's in 1904 included an 8-year-old Buster Keaton, performing "merriment" with his parents, and a vitagraph (a movie), an early departure from the typical live vaudeville show.²⁶⁸ A "Miss Annie Abbott, The Little Georgia Magnet," was on the Moss & Stoll Tour in Europe in the second half of 1906 receiving top billing and making good use of Sandow's quote in her advertisements.²⁶⁹ It is quite likely that these Annie Abbotts were Annie May Abbott with Theodore Abbey as manager. Now that Annie May and Theodore had defended themselves successfully in court following Annie Abbott Baylor's accusations, they borrowed from the original Annie Abbott's publicity and openly used the "Annie Abbott" name rather than "Annie May Abbott." Their publicity included the following:

When yet a little child she gave exhibitions first for scientific purposes, that the mystery might be solved, and dozens of elaborate treatises have been written by prominent specialists and scientists in America and Europe, but it is as much a mystery to-day as it was twelve years ago, when as a child of nine years she surprised, amazed, and terrified her father, a man weighing upwards of two hundred pounds, by lifting him and the chair in which he was sitting... .

Miss Abbott has since traveled throughout nearly the entire globe, giving public and private exhibitions. The souvenirs of her travels are numerous and invaluable; her scrap books contain 2,300 pages from the leading magazines, newspapers, and periodicals, written about her in scores of different languages and largely decorated with profuse illustrations. Her initial exhibition in England was at the Sandringham palace, before

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*the Prince of Wales; then at Windsor castle before her majesty; followed by a long public engagement at the Alhambra, where she was the craze. A great many private exhibitions were given. Afterward she appeared throughout Europe, before nearly every crowned head, many scientific societies, and her public exhibitions were attended with the same success that they were met with in London. Her scrap books, filled with the strongest and most unqualified endorsements, speak for the genuine interest that is manifested in her marvelous exhibition everywhere. Miss Abbott is of Huguenot descent, but a native of Georgia, and an intense lover of the South and of "home."*²⁷⁰



Annie May Abbott, 1909.

The accurate reference to the 1890s part of Annie Abbott's career, her scrapbooks, and the route of travel, suggest extensive knowledge of the original Annie Abbott, which would have come from Richard Abbey's personal knowledge of the act. Moreover, Annie May Abbott was

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

indeed of French (Huguenot) descent. Thus this particular Annie Abbott was most likely Annie May Abbott / Tillie Tatro.

Even so, attempting to imitate the original Annie Abbott's successful 1891-1893 tour and the impressive world tour of 1895-1902 of Annie May Abbott and Richard Abbey was not easy, or, as it turned out, possible. As Theodore Abbey wrote from Tampa, Florida in his Christmas day, 1931 letter to his son:

I succeeded in working the pay up to \$300 a week- sometimes less, but one week during the entire experience managed to get it up to \$400. But try as I might it seemed impossible to get any money ahead. Sometimes we would get quite a "roll"; but lost time and the expense of engaging a large number of men, and carrying two or three regularly invariably ate it up. I never worked at anything harder in my life; hesitated at no risks or adventures, until upon landing in Tampa about this time of year in 1914 I called it quits. We had been utterly destitute for months in New York, and when we finished here we were in practically the same condition. The pitiable phase of the situation as I saw it she hadn't a friend in the whole world. I told her to return to her sister and I would try to assist her from Atlanta. I was impressed with the activity in Tampa, and after the attempt in Atlanta was not attended with particular success, and still feeling my antipathy for the atmosphere resulting from incidents above related, I felt that I should meet with a greater measure of success in Tampa.

A publicity picture and ad in the Syracuse, New York *Herald* places Annie May Abbott and Theodore Abbey there in July 1909. Although a record of Theodore's and Annie May's exact itinerary is not known, since there were several Annie Abbotts or Annie May Abbotts traveling about, it seemed that

Chapter 13 - The Annie Abbotts Go Their Separate Ways

making a living with the Annie Abbott act during this time was difficult.

Evidence of the difficulty came from other sources as well, for an article from London reproduced in *The New York Times*²⁷¹ described a captured, high-profile prisoner named Silverburg, who was charged with swindling the Chilean railroad. He was being transported internationally to a country in Europe for trial. McCarthy, the officer accompanying, remarked:

In fact, he was so lively all the time that I kept the sharpest possible watch on him; even then he managed to fool me once, for I caught him standing the drinks and cigars for passengers, who had no idea, of course, that he was a prisoner and charging the same to me. On the boat, as passengers, were Miss Annie Abbott, "The Georgia Magnet," and her husband, on their way, I believe, to fulfill a Continental music hall contract. Silverberg made friends with these compatriots of his. I cautioned him against trying to play any tricks on them.

"That's all right." He said nonchalantly. "I have tried to, but it's no good. They have no money."

²⁵⁴ Autograph Album entries, June 1904-Mar 1907.

²⁵⁵ Tribune (Oakland, Ca.), 17 June 1905.

²⁵⁶ Tribune (Oakland, Ca.), 24 June 1905.

²⁵⁷ "Claim Annie Cheated Them. 'Georgia Wonder' is sued by Chicago Jewelers," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 August 1905, II.

²⁵⁸ Based on autograph album.

²⁵⁹ *Macon Telegraph*, 17 June 1906.

²⁶⁰ "Official Search For Georgia Magnet Begins," *Macon Telegraph*, 18 June 1906.

²⁶¹ "Gown Suit. Woman Says it Was Injured by Dyeing and Publicity," *Morning Olympian* (Seattle), 1 July 1906.

²⁶² *Idaho Statesman*, 6 November 1906.

²⁶³ *Omaha World Herald*, 5 March 1907.

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- ²⁶⁴ *The Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), 30 May 1905 & 2 June 1905.
- ²⁶⁵ *Trenton Times*, 16 October 1905, pp. 3, 7.
- ²⁶⁶ "'The Georgia Magnet' at Orpheum Next Week," *Atlanta Constitution*, 11 December 1908, p. 7, col. 1.
- ²⁶⁷ *Washington Post*, 24 Apr 1904; *Washington Post*, 13 April 1905, Section 2, p. 1, col. 4; *Washington Post*, 16 April 1905, p. 45, col. 4.
- ²⁶⁸ *Washington Post*, 3 May 1904.
- ²⁶⁹ *The Wizard: A Monthly Journal for All Entertainers*, Vol. 1, No. 11, July 1906, pp. 167-168; *The Conjuror's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 15 November 1906, p. 77; "Brevities," *The Magician: A Monthly Journal Devoted to Magic, Spiritualism, Hypnotism, and Human Progress*, Vol. 2, No. 10, September 1906.
- ²⁷⁰ "Annie Abbott, The Georgia Magnet," *The Washington Post*, 16 April 1905, 45, col. 4.
- ²⁷¹ "Silverberg Upset Chilean Road Plans," *The New York Times*, 2 January 1910, p. C3.

Chapter 14 - Bizarre Incidents On the Road to Home

In 1907, the original Annie Abbott was winding down her career and her life. The last entry in her autograph album is dated 1907 in Nebraska. However, some of her jewels showed up in 1909, as *The Washington Post* reported:

Pittsburg, Pa. July 12. Joseph Feldman [sic. probably James Feldman], who gives Washington as his home city, was arrested early this morning while endeavoring to sell \$15,000 worth of diamonds and several thousand dollars' worth of antique gold jewelry in the red light district. The jewelry is the finest ever seen in a police station in this city. There's a woman's watch marked "K.M.G.," eight diamond rings, diamond brooch, two diamond bracelets, and a diamond watch charm.

But the finest piece in the collection is a massive gold chain with links an inch in diameter, to each link of which is attached a gold coin of the leading countries of the world, no two coins being from the same country, and many of them surpassing in size a \$20 gold piece. Another piece in the collection is a small gold medallion, on the one side of which is the inscription, "To Annie Abbott, 1891," while on the reverse side is "From George, Duke of Cambridge."

The prisoner declares he is a traveling salesman, and says he gets most of his jewelry from pawn shops. When arrested he was endeavoring to

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

*dispose of a three-stone diamond ring, valued at not less than \$500, for \$15.*²⁷²

Annie Abbott apparently took notice of the article, for *The Washington Post* published the follow-on story:

Pittsburg, Pa. July 13 – James A. Feldman, who was arrested here early yesterday while trying to dispose of thousands of dollars' worth of diamonds and antique gold ornaments in the red-light district, tonight is bewailing his fate, when he heard that Annie Abbott, an actress and professional "strong woman," had identified the jewels as her property and was sending a detective from Philadelphia to take Feldman back to that city.

But what aroused Feldman was when a detective arrived this afternoon and said that Feldman, last Sunday, went to Miss Abbott's door and begged a cup of coffee, which was given to him, after which he slipped into the house and stole all her valued gifts.

"So she said that, did she?" Feldman demanded. "She didn't tell you how I have been her husband for the last five years; how she hounded me, or how she refused to let me leave her?"

Feldman declares that the "Strong woman" gave him the jewels to bind her promise that he would remain with her the rest of his life; that he took them, and after a fight with her came to Pittsburg and endeavored to dispose of the diamonds. He further asserts that the woman is telling the truth when she declares that the medallion inscribed, "To Annie Abbott, 1891, from George Duke of Cambridge," was a gift to her

from the English nobleman. He also exhibited a diamond ring valued at about \$300, which, he said had been given to his wife by King Edward while he was Prince of Wales.

The gold coins on the bracelet, Feldman declares, had been contributed each by one of the reigning monarchs of Europe, while the heavy 24-karat chain was a gift from the deposed Sultan of Turkey.

*Feldman will return to Philadelphia tomorrow, and he predicts warm times when he meets his wife. He seems to fear her extraordinary strength.*²⁷³

Annie Abbott's and Feldman's troubles were not over, for the next day, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported:

Pittsburg, July 15 – James Feldman and the jewelry gifts from European royalty which he confessed stealing from Mrs. Anna [sic] Abbott of Philadelphia, were taken back to Philadelphia yesterday by a detective. But the “little Georgia magnet,” as Mrs. Abbott was known years ago on the stage, will have to pay a large sum before she regains the jewelry, valued at \$35,000. Agents of the United States treasury department in Philadelphia were so surprised by her statement that she brought jewelry valued at \$87,000 to this country without paying duty, that Special Treasury Agent G. W. Stratton is investigating the case.

Mrs. Abbott also was surprised at the inquiry and said that she had taken her jewelry across the ocean three times without paying duty, as she said the jewelry consisted of presents to her from crowned heads and other European nobility. In 1893 and in 1897, she said, she arrived in New

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"



"The Little Georgia Wonder."

An aging Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood.

*York and that the customs agents had passed her gems free of duty when they saw the letters she carried from the donors, declaring they were gifts. Feldman said he met Mrs. Abbott through a matrimonial advertisement inserted by him in a Philadelphia newspaper eight months ago.*²⁷⁴

It is not known whether duty was paid. And James Feldman seemed to pass from her life. Perhaps it was nothing more than a publicity ploy, but in 1909, Annie Abbott was in Trenton, Philadelphia, Wilkes-Barre and other areas on the east coast where she was billed as the “original Georgia Magnet” as part of a vaudeville act at the Ninth and Arch Museum in Philadelphia and Poli’s in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.²⁷⁵ At Poli’s, Annie Abbott’s act was described as weird and bizarre with comedy thrown into her act that added spice to her performance. Although Annie Abbott’s act got top billing, the Keaton family also appeared as part of the night’s entertainment, with “Buster growing to be a comedian of no little merit which adds considerably to the family stunts.”²⁷⁶ It is an interesting aspect of vaudeville performers’ lives to note that as the Keaton family toured, they performed with Annie May Abbott and then 5 years later with the original Annie Abbott. By now, however, Buster was about 13 and obviously developing as a performer.

While the new performers, like Buster Keaton, were rising, Annie Abbott was showing the effects of her age. Back in her former home town of Columbia, South Carolina an article appeared in conjunction with her performance there that described various robberies of her jewels and, on at least one occasion, where the police refused to listen to the theft complaint because they thought it was an attempt to get free publicity. A picture clearly shows an aging Annie Abbott. Also described was her attachment to children and how she had found homes for several “motherless waifs.” She related that

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

she had three orphans, none of whom were her actual children, in her care at present, one of them only three months old and with her in Columbia.²⁷⁷

A problem occurred during one of the performances in Philadelphia, which again caused Annie Abbott to go to court as the accused:

... Annie Abbot [sic], better known as the "Georgia Magnet," ...tried her magnetism in vain Saturday upon Magistrate Wrigley of Philadelphia, when arraigned before him charged with assault and battery upon 7-year-old John Zachringer of North Fifth street, Philadelphia. The boy's mother preferred the charge, claiming that in a recent exhibition given by the defendant at a moving picture show on Germantown Avenue the defendant worked her peculiar powers on the boy to the extent of shattering his nerves, and a general shock from which he has not since recovered. The woman said that while the performance was going on Miss Abbot asked for a child to come to the platform and that her son seemed to be suddenly lifted from his seat and deposited gently on the stage. She screamed for her offspring, but without avail, the boy replying that he was unable to move. It was necessary for Mrs. Zachringer to secure the aid of a policeman to get her boy back, so she claimed, and when she did, the little fellow showed the effects of the strain he was under.

Miss Abbot did not deny the charge but in her own defense asked permission of the magistrate to give an exhibition of her talent. This was refused, however, and the case ended by the justice holding "the magnet" under \$500 bail for court. The

*proprietor of the moving picture show where Miss Abbot is now showing qualified as bondsman.*²⁷⁸

While awaiting trial, in January, 1910, Annie Abbott returned to Charlotte, North Carolina, where she had performed many years before. In an unusual interview, she again talked about children, but this time her own. Although great concern was expressed by Fred over Annie Abbott's welfare in the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906, their relationship had deteriorated by 1910, for she began to claim that her son, Fred Haygood, was dead, and as it turned out, she would continue to claim it. Yet in 1910, Fred, had residences in Florida and in Macon with his wife, Mattie, and two children.²⁷⁹ A newspaper article related the following story:

... With all her gifts and the fortune that has come to her in consequence of them, her eyes often fill with tears, if she permits herself to talk of herself. She has been the mother of three children - - a daughter and two sons, all of whom are now dead. 'Tis the strange taking of these children that, from day to day, burdens the soul of the wonderful little woman.

While playing in Columbia, some years ago, her daughter, then 9 years of age, was kidnapped, and though the mother spent a fortune in trying to find her, her fate is as sealed as that of Charley Ross. One son was frail and was sent to Macon, in the native State of Georgia, to recuperate. The other son, became ill, in Washington City [sic. Washington, New Jersey is intended], and was carefully nursed by his mother. One morning his mother, fearing that the end was near asked him if there was any message he would like delivered to his brother. He replied: "No brother was here to see me this morning, and he and sister will call for me this afternoon at 5 o'clock. I am going with

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

them. All is well. He will be at the church in Macon and we will see him there." That afternoon at 5 o'clock the little fellow died, and his body was taken to Macon for burial. When the funeral party from Washington arrived, it was met by another funeral party from Macon, with the remains of the other boy who had died the day before, and of whose death the mother had not been appraised. This case forms one of the strangest instances of mental telepathy, or spiritualism, known to the scientific world, and has been the subject of discussion by many great writers.

Miss Abbott is playing to great crowds at the Star. No one knows the secret of her power. She does not know it herself.

The friends of Col. Walter R. Henry are trying to get him to repeat at the Star tonight, the effort to lift Miss Abbott, which he made and failed in fifteen years ago. It will make it of more interest to know that Colonel Henry, on one occasion, outclassed the four hundred members of the Washington Athletic Association, in putting up heavy weights, as the papers of the capital stated. It is known also that for eighteen years he could lift a hundred-pound dumbbell straight up and that for four years he walked with a sixteen-pound steel walking-cane.²⁸⁰

It will be recalled that Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood had three children: Fred, Maud and Charlie. In the second paragraph above there is the strange reference to a kidnapped daughter. This is an apparent reference to Maud who ran off with Walter Smith, disappearing to Montana, and who had no further contact with the family. The son "sent to Macon....to recuperate" who died there about the same time as did her son in Washington, New Jersey is more difficult to explain

Chapter 14 - Bizarre Incidents On the Road to Home

rationally. It seems this is a reference to her son Fred who lived in Macon. His relations with his mother were not good. Perhaps, in her mind she considered him as having died. Her son Charlie Haygood did die, March 30, 1901, in Washington, New Jersey. In his *Washington Star* obituary there is a comment about a double tragedy mentioning that Charlie's brother had recently died. However, there was no brother who had died. Clearly, Annie Abbott intentionally gave the reporter incorrect information about the death of Fred in Macon. Inexplicably, nine years later the thought that Fred was dead was still in her mind.

Even so, her performances went on. The next day's paper proclaimed:

*It's Not Hypnotism. Col. W. R. Henry Tests
Theory Which is Sometimes Advanced To Explain
Why People Can't Lift Miss Abbott.*

"She weighs five hundred pounds, sir."

The speaker was none other than Col. W. R. Henry, and who will say that he is not conservative. That is his estimate of the weight of Miss Annie Abbott, spiritualistic medium at the Star this week

... .

"I will make the attempt on one condition," said the Herculean colonel, rising in the audience and towering over his neighbors. "That is that I shall be blindfolded and thus the lady shall not have even the slightest chance to hypnotize me instantaneously at a glance, and that she shall not speak a word."

It was done. The lady retired, the colonel was escorted to the stage by Proprietor J. F. Newell and he was blindfolded. She then returned, he was led to her and caught her about the waist. Then he pulled. Then he tugged. Then he pulled some more. There was "nothing to it."²⁸¹

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

In April, 1910, a jury trial over the assault of seven-year-old John Zachringer, Jr. was held, in which Annie Abbott was acquitted.²⁸² Immediately afterwards she appeared at the police station with a complaint against Armand De Villers, whom she claimed to be her husband and whom she accused of retaining jewelry belonging to her and seeing Mrs. Jane Belfield, an authoress who lived in Germantown and who attended the hearing stylishly dressed in black:

Mrs. De Villers, [Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood], who is probably twice as old as her husband, says that he married her in Camden on Last New Year's Day. ...

"He may not admit it, but he's my husband," said Miss Abbott, as she pointed toward the defendant, who smiled. "I met him in Europe in 1901. He was a mere boy then. He followed me wherever I went, and last winter he came to this city and on New Year's Day we journeyed to Camden and were married. Later Mrs. Belfield came between us and she has been trying to get him away from me."

Counsel for DeVillers, declared that his marriage to Miss Abbott was not legal. "He was a victim of her hypnotic power and that explains why she claims him as her husband," remarked the lawyer.

*"That's untrue." Miss Abbott replied. "I don't hypnotize. But I see visions. Some time ago I saw a vision in which my husband appeared in a patrol wagon. I saw a woman in black, too. I told my husband about it and he did not seem to like it."*²⁸³

Remarkably like her second "marriage" to T. L. Embry some twenty two years before, this marriage to De Villers reeks of a publicity stunt. Later her son Fred would claim that she was not well and that he went to Philadelphia to bring her

Chapter 14 - Bizarre Incidents On the Road to Home

home.²⁸⁴ Annie Abbott returned home by May, 1911 to Macon, Georgia, near Milledgeville where she had begun her act 16 years earlier. She was said to be visiting Mrs. Emmett Barnes in Milledgeville. Once again she gave a performance at the Milledgeville opera house.²⁸⁵ She also gave entertainments in Milledgeville on behalf of the new Methodist church²⁸⁶ and the United Daughters of the Confederacy.²⁸⁷

It may have been one of the performances in Milledgeville that Callie Proctor Lee (1889-1968), along with 2 other girls, attended. Mrs. Lee recalled the performance to her daughter, Louise Wiggins, some years later.²⁸⁸ Almost certainly her account is one of the last eye-witness accounts of one of Annie Abbott's final performances. It is also a time when Annie Abbott reverted to using the name Dixie Haygood, a name familiar to those in Milledgeville:

During the performance, Dixie Haygood had a girl sit in a chair. She'd put her hand on the girl's head and a man could not lift the chair the girl was sitting on.

Dixie had people write down on paper what they had lost, and a hat was passed to collect the papers. The hat was brought to the stage, and Dixie dumped the contents and burned the papers without reading them. She then went around and told the people what they had lost and where it was. One woman had lost a diamond ring. Dixie told her she had been gardening in her flower garden and the ring was under a rose. A man had lost the spare tire off the back of his car. Dixie told him that it was across the street from the State Prison under a pecan tree. These items were later found as Dixie described.

Two other girls and I were sitting in the back of the Opera House in Milledgeville and were making fun of Dixie. Dixie looked at us and said,

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

"When the others leave, you won't be able to go." When the show was over we three could not get out of our seats. Dixie said, "Callie, I'm not going to hurt you. Don't be afraid." But I was afraid, not that I thought Dixie was evil or would hurt me but because of the power she had.

It was also described by Callie Lee that when Dixie went to England in 1891, Dixie's mother was very upset at her going and the danger. Dixie told her mother that when she got over there her mother's oil lamp would go out. And it did.

As Louise Wiggins recalled of her mother's account, "Dixie definitely had some kind of power. Some people say it is from the Devil but I don't think the Devil would give that kind of power. I think it was from God. God gave her such powers."

²⁷² "Offers Gems Too Cheap. *Washingtonian*, With Fortune in Pockets, Held in Pittsburg," 13 July 1909, p. 1, col. 4.

²⁷³ "She Claims the Gems. 'Strong Woman' Also Wants the Arrest of Feldman. He Says She is His Wife," *Washington Post*, 14 July 1909, p. 5.

²⁷⁴ "Georgia Magnet Drawing Trouble. Mrs. Anna (sic) Abbott Clashes With Uncle Sam," *Atlanta Constitution*, 16 July 1909, p. 9, col. 3.

²⁷⁵ "Museum Opens With Attractive Program," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7 September 1909.

²⁷⁶ "Annie Abbott at Poli's," *Wilkes-Barre (PA) Times*, 16 November 1909.

²⁷⁷ "Annie Abbott is Mystifying," *The State (Columbia, SC)*, 12 October 1909.

²⁷⁸ "Annie Abbott Wanted to Show Magistrate She Could Lift Boy. 'Georgia Magnet' Who Recently Appeared Here, In Trouble in Philadelphia," *Wilkes-Barre (PA) Times*, 29 November 1909.

²⁷⁹ 1910 Federal Census, Ortega, Duval Co., FL; "Injured In Runaway. Fred Haygood Thrown From Buggy on Forsyth Road," *Macon Telegraph* 7 August 1911; Macon City Directories for 1909, 1915.

²⁸⁰ "Amusements. Miss Abbott's Strange Story," *Charlotte (NC) Observer*, 27 January 1910.

²⁸¹ *Charlotte Observer*, 28 January 1910.

²⁸² "Hypnotist Has Husband Arrested. Accuses Him of Larceny of \$20 Worth of Jewelry, Another Woman in Case." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 April 1910.

²⁸³ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 15 April 1910.

Chapter 14 - Bizarre Incidents On the Road to Home

²⁸⁴ “Mrs. Dixie Haygood Is Laid To Rest In Milledgeville,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 November 1915, p. 7, col. 5.

²⁸⁵ “Mrs. Annie Abbott,” *Union-Recorder*, 2 May 1911.

²⁸⁶ “Milledgeville, GA,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 7 May 1911, p. 54, col. 4.

²⁸⁷ “Gives Entertainment Milledgeville U.D.C.” *Macon Telegraph*, 13 May 1911.

²⁸⁸ Louise Wiggins recounted the following account to the authors on 24 October 2001.

Chapter 15 - The Mysterious Death of Dixie Haygood

It appeared that the original Annie Abbott / Dixie Annie Jarratt Haygood had come home to retire. But what happened next was a surprise. As the Macon paper reported:

*“Dixie Magnet” Denies Boy is Her Real Son.
Back Again in Limelight She Once Enjoyed.
ALLEGED SON ARRESTED*

Charged With Threatening Miss Dixie A. Jarratt With Pistol – Boy Declares She is Mentally Irresponsible and He is Real and Not Adopted Son.

“The Little Dixie Magnet,” the woman who some time ago gained much notoriety on the stage through her inexplicable power to perform feats of great strength, came before the public yesterday when she took out three warrants in the justice court of Roland B. Hall against Fred Hamp Haygood, her alleged son. The “Dixie Magnet” was once Mrs. Charles Haygood, but now she is living in Bellevue under her maiden name, Miss Dixie A. Jarratt.

One of the warrants charges Haygood with having threatened her with a pistol, one is a peace warrant and one a possessory warrant to reclaim some of the Property of Miss Jarratt alleged to have been taken by Haygood. After hearing some of the evidence the case was set over until next Friday.

In the hearing, Haygood fought the warrants on the ground that Miss Jarratt is mentally

Chapter 15 - The Mysterious Death of Dixie Haygood

irresponsible. He alleges that he is her son, but Miss Jarratt insists, it is said, that the son born to her at the time she was Mrs. Haygood subsequently died and that Fred H. Haygood is a boy adopted by her afterward.

Miss Jarratt talks with zest of her career on the stage. She has appeared in almost every country of the civilized world, and her last performance was given only about a year ago in Milledgeville, although she has been seriously ill for two years.

*She says that she thinks her power, which she terms magnetism, is dwindling and does not know whether she could perform the feats of strength now that she was capable of several years ago. To demonstrate this power she produces two steel pins used to hold her hat on that are magnetized, as she claims, from contact with her hair.*²⁸⁹

In response, Fred filed a lunacy complaint against her:

Macon, Ga. Jul 11 – (Special to the Chronicle) – Mrs. Dixie Jarratt, world-famous as “the Little Dixie Magnet,” a woman with a strange magnetic power, is in the Bibb County jail charged with lunacy as the result of a warrant issued by a man named Fred Haygood, who says he is her son. Mrs. Jarratt was in vaudeville for years, and traveled the world over. One of her prized possessions is an engraved gold bracelet given her by the late King Edward.

Mrs. Jarratt talks rationally, and claims that Haygood, whom she says is only an adopted son, is persecuting her because she omitted him from her will when she drew up that instrument recently. She is quite wealthy. Her husband is dead.

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

*Under the law, she must remain in jail ten days before given a hearing to determine her sanity.*²⁹⁰

When Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood came to the jail, she brought with her about \$4,000 worth of jewels for safekeeping. She was said to be a wealthy woman and to own considerable property in Milledgeville.²⁹¹

After 13 days in jail, the trial was held. In anticipation of the trial it was reported:

*The trial of Miss Dixie A. Jarratt, known some years ago on the stage as the "Little Dixie Magnet," now held in the county jail on a charge of insanity, made by her alleged son, Fred Hamp Haygood, will be held this morning. Miss Jarratt was placed in jail twelve days ago and asserts that she is vastly improved in health since her sleeping behind the jail bars. She insists that she is absolutely healthy in mind and her jailers after attending her for almost two weeks are of the same opinion.*²⁹²

Whether the improvement in health behind jail bars was a tongue-in-cheek allusion to her magnetism being affected by the jail bars or whether it was a serious comment is unknown. The following day, the jury was out for only a few minutes.²⁹³ It was reported:

From Macon Telegraph.

"The Little Dixie Magnet" of stage land – in private life Miss Dixie A. Jarratt – is now free. She was declared sane by the jury that sat on her case yesterday, and was released from jail where she has been for 13 days, since the service of the writ of insanity taken out by P. L. Tomlinson. The jury was out only a few minutes making its verdict.

Practically the only evidence to show that Miss Jarratt was insane was that brought forward by

Chapter 15 - The Mysterious Death of Dixie Haygood

Mr. Fred H. Haygood the man who claims to be the son of Miss Jarratt, and who she claims with equal vigor is not her son, but a boy adopted by her years ago on the death of her real son. The matter of Haygood's relationship to Miss Jarratt also came up and there were two witnesses to give it as their opinion that he was a legitimate son.

TOADS HER COMPANIONS

Haygood took the stand and told of eccentricities of his alleged mother. He says that often she would go into the back yard in the wee hours of the morning and there, in utter darkness, remain for hours at the time playing with toads. He said furthermore that it was no unusual thing for her to sit on the porch into the early morning singing lustily.

The two witnesses whose testimony was to the effect that Haygood was Miss Jarratt's son by her former husband, Charles Haygood, of Milledgeville, were Patrolman Jake Caraker and Mrs. Witt Bass, her sister [Editor's note: Mrs. Hardy Whitfield Bass, birth name Eleanor Jarratt²⁹⁴]. Patrolman Caraker said that he had lived in Milledgeville near Miss Jarratt and had always thought and understood that Haygood was her son. Her sister's testimony was even stronger. She says that she was at the house of Mrs. Haygood shortly after the birth of her sister's child, and had never since that time heard any attempt to discredit Fred Haygood's right to the supposed relationship.²⁹⁵

The war between mother and son continued. In August, 1912, Mrs. Dixie A. Jarratt took out three more warrants against Fred and he was placed under bail. One warrant was

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

for pointing a pistol at her, one was for sending a threatening letter, and the third was a warrant for various articles. The proceedings were to recover 214 different personal and household articles that she claimed belonged to her. She received a threatening letter in which Haygood admitted pointing a pistol at her and expressing regret that he did not take her life then and there. The letter was also said to contain the threat that she would be killed if she attempted to recover any goods or issued any more warrants for him.²⁹⁶

In response to the charge, Fred made a statement, the gist of which was that Mrs. Jarratt was his real mother and that she had been for years a victim of a drug habit that made her not responsible for her actions.²⁹⁷

It was some time before the original suit by the "Dixie Magnet" against Fred for household possessions came to trial. On April 25, 1913, the *Macon Telegraph* reported that the "Dixie Magnet" lost her suit in the superior court against F. H. and Mrs. Mattie Haygood for possessions of household goods. A dramatic feature of the hearing was Dixie Jarratt Haygood's denial that Fred Haygood was her son. When she refused to recognize him as her son, he broke down and cried in the court room.²⁹⁸

After Dixie was released, she appeared in another trial, not as a defendant or an accuser, but as a witness. As a witness for the defense, she testified against her boarder, Mrs. Mattie Shipman, saying that Shipman often remained away from the house all night and that on numerous occasions Shipman did not come in until late at night.²⁹⁹ In addition, Dixie's self-proclaimed "power" also entered into the testimony:

Macon, Ga. June 23 (Special) – Mind reading figured in a habeas corpus hearing in the Bibb County superior court this morning while Mrs. Dixie Jarratt, known as the "Dixie Magnet," was on the stand.

The case was that of Mrs. Mattie Shipman against her husband, O. S. Shipman, to secure

Chapter 15 - The Mysterious Death of Dixie Haygood

custody of her 6-year-old daughter, now in Tampa, Fla. Mrs. Abbott was called as a witness and asked if she was a mind reader.

"A good many people think that I am a seer," said Mrs. Abbott, "And as a matter of fact I do possess some such power."

"Did you say that by merely waving your hand in front of Judge Mathews' face you could influence his decision one way or the other?" asked Attorney W. D. McNeil.

"No, I did not," said Mrs. Abbott, "but I could read the judge's mind if the conditions were favorable."

"When did you ever see the child known as Thelma, who figures in this case?" asked the attorney.

"In my mind. My second sight!" was Mrs. Abbott's reply.

Judge Mathews declined to take cognizance of such testimony and laughed heartily at Mrs. Abbott's declaration that she could read his mind, but did not give her a chance to demonstrate her skill.³⁰⁰

Whether Dixie was not well or merely acting, or whether she had taken on the persona of Annie Abbott is unclear. Even when she was no longer on the road, she seemed to be playing the part of Annie Abbott. Not only while the battle between Fred and Dixie was going on, but after she passed away, Fred would claim that she was unwell and that he had brought her back from Philadelphia because of it. Whether this was true or merely an excuse to break the will in which she did not bequeath him anything is unclear. Though she was now only 50 years old, she had had a demanding life and was possibly influenced by drug use.

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

With Fred no longer a close son, she now was forced to plan for her own declining health. On July 8, 1915, she wrote a will naming Miss Irene Herndon as a beneficiary to receive the entire estate, including two houses in Milledgeville, for taking care of Dixie in her final days.³⁰¹ The will also named H. F. Brooks as the sole executor of the will, and he and two other witnesses attested that Mrs. F. C. Baylor "was at the time of said signing ... of sound and disposing mind and memory." It is clear from her will that she did not intend to give or leave anything to Fred.

Meanwhile son Fred, about 27, now was having his own set of marital problems for, after having three more children and declaring bankruptcy in 1915,³⁰² he left his wife Mattie, who continued to work in the cotton mill in Macon. In Jacksonville, Florida, Fred married Annie Lillian Johnson, formerly of Macon, who died at age 23, possibly in childbirth, Mar 21, 1919, leaving a son, Edgar.³⁰³ He shortly thereafter filed a marriage license with Ada L. Barnes in 1919³⁰⁴ and appeared in the 1920 census with Ada (age 33) and her daughter, Grace (age 9) in Jacksonville Ward 1, Duval Co., Florida. This arrangement would be short-lived, for in 1925,³⁰⁵ he would marry Grace Mae Beach, a previously married woman with a child, who is believed to have been born in 1902.³⁰⁶ Grace Mae Beach and Fred lived out their lives together. As Fred's grandchildren remembered him later, he was an imposing figure but a jolly old man, always the center of attention, who enjoyed and rarely left his five-acre riverfront home and prized garden until his death in 1947.³⁰⁷

On November 22, 1915, Dixie Haygood, the original Annie Abbott, passed away. Her death certificate stated the cause as "general peritonitis and arthritis."³⁰⁸ Newspapers throughout Georgia announced her death, and several carried long and stirring articles about her. As we read in the *Valdosta Times*:

A few days ago, while looking over an old copy of the Times, found on the street here and printed about 27 years ago, we found this

paragraph:

"All the Georgia towns, both large and small, are developing girls with strange powers similar to those of Lula Hurst. It will soon be that no town will be fashionable which hasn't its electric girl."

The next day we read in one of the Macon papers that Mrs. D. A. Haygood was dead, but the report, so far as it affected her past life, was so far wrong that we did not recognize it as being the "Little Georgia Magnet," whose star of fame far surpassed that of the original "electric wonder" referred to in the paragraph above. Still later, in the Milledgeville News, published in the city where she was born and reared, had an account of her funeral in which it declared that "during the past 15 years she has appeared before the crowned heads of Europe and Asia," and that "she attracted international attention by her wonderful acting and display of histrionic ability."

All of which reminds us that fame is fleeting indeed. Here is a woman whose picture appeared in every newspaper in Europe and America who appeared before all of the crowned heads and yet the paper in the city where she was born does not seem to know that her fame was not founded upon her "acting or histrionic ability," but upon some supernatural power which defied those who sought to explain it. Her power might have been physical strength in a man, but that could hardly explain it in a woman so frail as the "Little Magnet." Her entertainment of about two hours consisted in tests of various sorts. One of them was that, when placing her hands upon a chair, without clenching it, but raising it from the floor, a dozen strong men

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

could not put it on the floor or break her grasp, without twisting or jerking it. She could take a billiard cue between her fingers and a dozen men could not lower it when she resisted or raise it from the floor when she placed it there. By laying her hands upon a raised umbrella of steel frame, the cover would be torn from it as though lightning struck. She had many other tests and in no city where she appeared did anyone who witnessed her performances doubt the genuineness of her strange power.

"The Little Georgia Magnet" was formerly Miss Dixie Jarratt and married Charles E. [sic] Haygood (known as "Pig" on account of being unusually stout), and who was killed in Milledgeville while serving as chief of police. Mrs. Haygood was always known as a spiritualist, a good "medium," and "spirit rappings" talking with the dead were often held at her home more as amusement than anything else. The night that Lula Hurst -- now Mrs. Paul Atkinson -- gave her entertainment as an "electric wonder," Mrs. Haygood attended. Going home, she tried the same tricks and performed them so well that her fame was accomplished after she went upon the stage. After midnight that night, her husband ran out on the street and called in neighbors to see the "performance," which all regarded as wonderful. Her first entertainment outside of Milledgeville was given for the Atlanta Library Association. A few days later, her husband was killed and she abandoned thoughts of a stage career.

Blackshear, of Macon, persuaded her to go on the road. Under his management and later under

Chapter 15 - The Mysterious Death of Dixie Haygood

the management of a man named Abbott - to whom she was married - she visited every capital in Europe, played before every court, including the sultan's harem, and brought back to America trunks loaded with gifts from royal personages, including a beautiful Morocco lined, silver mounted writing desk from the King of Italy, similar gifts from the Russian noblemen, Germans, French and Englishmen. She gave entertainments before Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle and had testimonials and gifts from the queen and from the Prince of Wales, who succeeded to the throne as king.

*It is one of the ironies of fate that such a woman should die and even her own generation forget all about her.*³⁰⁹

Dixie Annie Jarratt Haygood / Annie Abbott, was laid to rest in Memory Hill Cemetery, next to her first husband, Charles N. Haygood, and son, Charlie Haygood, Jr. Her grave was unmarked until 2001, when the authors and descendants placed a gravestone there.

Dixie Haygood, whose last married name was, in all likelihood, Mrs. Frank Baylor, transacted deeds and left her will under the name of Mrs. F. C. Baylor. The will named Irene Herndon as beneficiary, but on October 1, 1915, just before her death, Dixie created an indenture and left her two homes in Milledgeville to her doctor, J. W. Rogers, with whom she lived on Orange Street in Macon. Like the will to Herndon, the indenture stated that "Dr. J. W. Rogers shall furnish her with a comfortable home in his home for and during her natural life, together with all the necessities of life consisting of food and clothing, and necessary medicines and medical treatment."³¹⁰

The February following Dixie's death, Fred was in court with an attempt to get the indenture to Dr. Rogers cancelled. Fred Haygood --

seeks to recover from Dr. Rogers a deed to certain property in Milledgeville, which Haygood claims Dr. Rogers had his mother transfer to him when she was non compos mentis.

The suit filed alleges last October, when Mrs. Haygood was in her last illness, Dr. Rogers persuaded her to deed to him a certain valuable piece of land in Milledgeville. The deed, it is stated was given in October, although Dr. Rogers failed to file it until November 22, a day after Mrs. Haygood's death.

The petition alleges further that Dr. Rogers, acting upon his own initiative and by his request, carried Mrs. Haygood to his home and treated her there for three months prior to her death, during that time, the petition cites, having her convey to him the property in question, which transaction the petitioner alleges was illegal, as Mrs. Haygood was in no condition, either physically or mentally, to transact business or to make a contract.³¹¹

The court decreed that the deeds were to be disallowed and that Fred Haygood would obtain the property, but that Dr. Rogers should receive \$550 for his services. The will to Irene Herndon was also disallowed, as described by an extensive write-up in the *Macon Telegraph*:

*Miss Herndon Loses in Baylor Will Case
Ordinary Gives Fortune of "Dixie Magnet" to
Her Son.*

The will of Mrs. F. C. Baylor, also known in the thespian world as Dixie Haygood and Annie Abbott, in which she gave her entire estate to Miss Irene Herndon, of this city, was voided yesterday by order of Judge C. M. Wiley of Bibb county ordinary court.

Chapter 15 - The Mysterious Death of Dixie Haygood

Fred Haygood, son of Mrs. Baylor, contested the will on the ground that his mother was a user of narcotics and was insane at the time the document was made. Evidence introduced by Attorneys Feagin & Hancock for the plaintiff tended to substantiate these claims. The ordinary's court record showed that Mrs. Haygood was adjudged insane five days before her death, Nov. 21 of last year. It was on this record that Judge Wiley passed the order.

Miss Herndon was given the entire estate in the will because of her care for Mrs. Haygood in her last days, when she lived on Lawton avenue. The testament was made several years ago, and had in it the stipulation that Miss Herndon must care for Mrs. Haygood for the remainder of her life before she should come into possession of the estate.

Reversion to Orphanage

In the event Miss Herndon failed to perform this service, the property was to go in its entirety to the Methodist Orphanage home of this city. Haygood, the only living relative of the woman, was not mentioned in the will.

A bill was filed in the superior court, seeking to recover the property, some time ago, by attorneys for Haygood, the grounds set forth being that Mrs. Baylor was irresponsible at the time she made her will and that her physician plied her with narcotics. H. F. Brooks was executor of the estate and was made a codefendent. Since that time, additional facts have developed, so attorneys decided to carry the case into the ordinary court.³¹²

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

On July 6, 1916, the entry in the Minutes of the Court Ordinary, Bibb County, read,

The petition of Fred H. Haygood a citizen of the United States residing in the State of Georgia, of lawful age, sheweth that Mrs. F. C. Baylor, alias Dixie Haygood, alias Annie Abbott departed this life on the 21st day of November 1915 a resident of said State and County, intestate, leaving an estate of real and personal property, of the probable value of Two Thousand Dollars, and that under the law, it is necessary that said estate should be administered; that petitioner is the only son, and only heir at law.

Fred Haygood did not mention the Baylor twins as other descendants and was made administrator of the estate. After all was said and done, proceeds from the sale of the real estate were \$1,896, with Fred getting \$403.66 after all creditors and lawyers were paid. His inventory showed no jewelry or household items of any significance.

²⁸⁹ "'Dixie Magnet' Denies Boy is Her Real Son," *Macon Telegraph*, 6 July 1912.

²⁹⁰ "'Little Magnet' Is In Jail," *The Augusta Chronicle*, 12 July 1912, p. 2, col. 4.

²⁹¹ , "'Dixie Magnet' Held On Lunacy Charge. She Cuts Alleged Son Out of Will and He Has Her Arrested, Claiming She Is Insane," *Macon Telegraph*, 12 July 1912.

²⁹² "To Try 'Dixie Magnet' on Charge of Lunacy," *Macon Telegraph*, 22 July 1912.

²⁹³ "'Dixie Magnet' Sane Says Jury in Verdict. Son Says She Spent Nights Playing With Toads, Or Singing On Porch," *Macon Telegraph*, 23 July 1912.

²⁹⁴ Per Memory Hill web site at <http://friendsofcems.org/MemoryHill/>

²⁹⁵ "'Dixie Magnet' Sane Says Jury in Verdict," *Union-Recorder*, 23 July 1912, p. 1.

²⁹⁶ "'Dixie Magnet' In Limelight Again," *Atlanta Constitution*, 17 August 1912, p. 3, col. 1.

Chapter 15 - The Mysterious Death of Dixie Haygood

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- ²⁹⁷ “‘Dixie Magnet’ Again Breaks In Limelight. Takes out Three Warrants for Fred Haygood, Who She Denies is Her Real Son, Despite His Claims,” *Macon Telegraph*, 17 August 1912.
- ²⁹⁸ “He Cries in Court When Woman Denies She Is His Mother,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, 24 April 1913, p. 3, col. 4.
- ²⁹⁹ “Court Decrees Father Shall Retain His Son,” *Macon Telegraph*, 4 October 1913.
- ³⁰⁰ “Mind Reading in Court,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 June 1913, p. 9, col. 3.
- ³⁰¹ “Miss Herndon Loses in Baylor Will Case,” *Macon Telegraph*, 5 May 1916, p. 1; Mrs. Frank C. Baylor will, Bibb County, Ga. Courthouse.
- ³⁰² “Notice of First Meeting of Creditors,” *Macon Telegraph*, 24 August 1915.
- ³⁰³ *Macon Telegraph*, 21 March 1919, as cited in Emalee B. Crawford, 1989, *Doles Cemetery, Macon GA*; Jesse B. Hart & Bro. Mortuary communication and funeral record. It is not known whether the son Edgar was Fred’s son or a son by a former marriage.
- ³⁰⁴ Marriage license, Duval County, FL., 21 June 1919.
- ³⁰⁵ Marriage record and Federal census 1930 Jacksonville District 33, Duval Co. Florida.
- ³⁰⁶ Fred Haygood family records.
- ³⁰⁷ Connie Bohannon and Shirley Coward, communications February 2010.
- ³⁰⁸ Mrs. D. A. Haygood death certificate, Macon, Bibb County, Georgia, Custodian’s #28, p. 7.
- ³⁰⁹ 4 December 1915.
- ³¹⁰ Indenture of Dixie A. Haygood, Bibb County Courthouse, and deed records of Baldwin County Courthouse.
- ³¹¹ “Wants Deed Cancelled,” *Macon Telegraph*, 19 February 1916.
- ³¹² *Macon Telegraph*, 5 May 1916, p. 1.

Chapter 16 - The End of the Abbeys: The End of an Era

Richard N. Abbey and his Last Annie Abbott

It is not known for certain what happened to Richard N. Abbey after he and Annie May Abbott separated. He appeared to have had no contact with his children by his first wife, Fannie Dora Snowden. However, it is very likely that he started a third Annie Abbott Act with Prudence Ward, born 1868 in Ohio.³¹³

Prudence Ward, married in 1889 to Harry Rolfson, went under the stage name of Marie Rolfson from approximately 1906 until 1910 and performed the "Little Magnet Act." She also went under the name of Annie Abbott. She appeared as Annie May Abbott in Cumberland Maryland in 1906,³¹⁴ where she was advertised as weighing 103 pounds and as the only person in the world who had

Wallace Park
CASINO

One Week, Commencing
Monday, June 24th

Marie Rolfson



The most wonderful woman in the world.
Unparalleled mystery. What is this mighty
power that has baffled the scientific world?

**Lifts 10 Men. 10 Men Can't
Lift Her.**

Biggest Laugh of the Year

Admission - 10c and 20c

Amateur Night Friday
3 - BIG PRIZES - 3

Amateurs phone Mr. Leno, care Craig Hotel,
and he will help you arrange your act.

Marie Rolfson ad.

Chapter 16 - The End of the Abbeys: The End of an Era

been before every crowned head in the world. Her picture as Annie Abbott matches her picture in her advertisement for Marie Rolfson. At one point she was managed by a "J. Victor Abbott" of Smith St, Atlanta, Georgia, whose real name may have been J. V. Lane.³¹⁵ She also stated that she was "adopted by" Richard N. Abbey,³¹⁶ confirming that Richard had indeed continued managing the Annie Abbott Act after both Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood and Annie May Abbott / Tillie Tatro.

In 1908 she was assisted in her act by Leopold McLaglen, who was an actor and brother of Victor McLaglen, who appeared in many John Wayne movies.³¹⁷ Leopold McLaglen was large like his brother and proclaimed himself to be the jiu-jitsu champion of the world; he was a colorful person both off and on the stage.

Sometime after 1910, Prudence used the stage name Annie Abbott exclusively and began fulfilling theatrical engagements in Manila, Hong Kong and elsewhere.³¹⁸ In late 1912, McLaglen managed the "American Variety Company," which included Annie Abbott, went to India, and later appeared with the Hugo Brothers American Amusement Company.³¹⁹ They definitely toured together in South Africa in 1913³²⁰ and in Shanghai in 1914.³²¹ In October 1918 Prudence went to England as part of the America's Over There Theatre League



Annie Abbott's (Marie Rolfson's / Prudence Ward's) picture from her stationery.

under the YMCA to entertain the troops, and Armistice Day found her as part of the big feature on the bill at the gala performance at the Eagle Hut in London.³²²

Some believe the original Annie Abbott was last heard from in 1918.³²³ This last Annie Abbott was neither Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood, who was already dead,

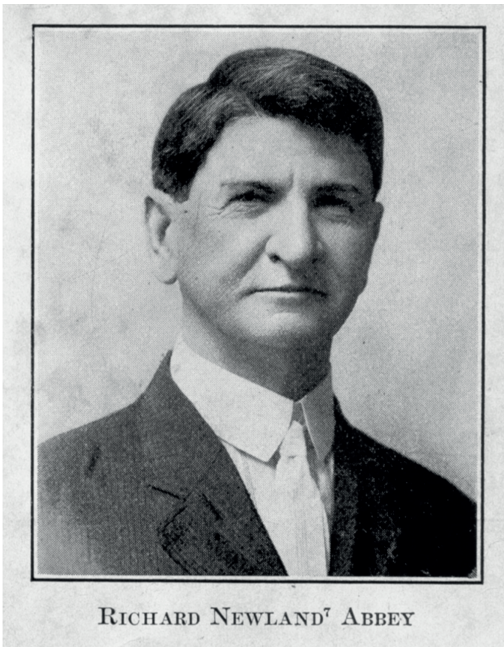
Annie Abbott, “The Little Georgia Magnet”

nor Annie May Abbott / Tillie Tatro, who was no longer performing at that time. The “last heard from” 1918 Annie Abbott was most likely Prudence Ward McLaglen, a.k.a. Marie Rolfson, who at some point was mentored by Richard N. Abbey.

Marie Rolfson’s picture appeared as Annie Abbott in 1921 in a widely published newspaper article about Annie Abbott and was described as having been “adopted by R. N. Abbey, of Atlanta.” Annie Abbott (Marie Rolfson) stated she had been overseas with the British and American Red Cross for four years.³²⁴ It may be that Richard worked with her in about 1906, when she first started using “Annie Abbott” as a stage name, or he could have traveled with her during her earliest overseas theatrical engagements such as those in Manila, Hong Kong, and South Africa. But on Dec. 24, 1915 in St. Joseph, Missouri, Richard married Myrtle Stone Beers, who was approximately 33 years younger than he and who had a

daughter about 9 years old.³²⁵

About that time, Richard contributed to the *Abbe-Abbey Genealogy*, *In Memory of John Abbe and His Descendants*, which was a large genealogy of the Abbey family. In the genealogy, he described his two wives: Fannie Dora Snowden and Myrtle Beers. No mention was made of a marriage to Dixie Haygood / Annie Abbott or his short-



Richard N. Abbey. (From the Abbey genealogy)

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lived marriage to Tillie Tatro / Annie May Abbott. Included in the genealogy was his picture, as shown here, and a lengthy description of his Masonic honors.

In the 1920 census, Richard was described as a salesman in “moving pictures” and a renter who was living with Myrtle and her daughter Ruth in Minneapolis, Minnesota.³²⁶ In the *Abbe-Abbey Genealogy*, he described himself as general representative for several western states of the V-L-S-E Motion Picture Combination, a film distribution company. Something happened soon thereafter to Myrtle and her daughter, for on September 1, 1927, the following small article appeared as a curiosity item in *The Sun-Herald* of Lime Spring, Iowa:

*Richard N. Abbey, 75, died in the county hospital and was to have been buried in potter's field, when a tiny Masonic emblem was found in his clothing. Inquiry disclosed he was a member of Emulation Lodge No. 1100, Bombay, India, and had known King George of England [sic] as a boy. He was buried with Masonic ceremonies.*³²⁷

Richard died May 8, 1927 at age 75 and was buried in Rosehill Cemetery, Chicago. Richard's Masonic involvement from 1895 on, in all parts of the world, saved him from a pauper's burial.³²⁸ How ironic that the talented manager who helped establish a world-famous act, which had attracted huge audiences in England and Europe, and which had been performed before royalty, should be buried without fanfare and nearly without recognition of his passing. He, like the original Annie Abbott herself, died in relative obscurity and alone, despite the fame, several spouses, and several children.

Theodore H. and Annie May Abbey

Meanwhile Theodore H. and Annie May Abbott / Tillie Tatro had ceased performing and had settled in Tampa about 1914, where he was involved in real estate, including building

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

a 12-story building running about \$300,000 to \$400,000.³²⁹ He wrote to his son, Leonard:

At this period I visited Atlanta on a mission related to the financing of this building, about which I was fired with enthusiasm, and I shall never, or have I ever, forgotten an incident indelably [sic] stamped upon my memory.

On returning you accompanied me to the railway station; we sat, waiting for the train to leave, on a rail outside the station -- you beseeched me not to return to Tampa but to stay in Atlanta. My boy, you never will know what it cost me right there to refuse. How different had I acceded to your wishes? I felt that success was immediately before me at last and that you were too young to comprehend the situation.

The war [World War I] came on and the building project went to pot, but I kept working- first at one thing then another- sometimes up sometimes down until the war was over, in the meantime building steadily for the future.

Some six months after I came here Annie [Annie May Abbott/Tillie Tatro] wrote me that her sister with whom she had been living, had ordered her to leave the house- that she had no place to go except on the street.

I borrowed some \$40 or \$50 which I sent her to come to Tampa, since it would have been impossible for me to send her sufficient money to live on there. I had made valuable acquaintances here and the situation at once became seriously embarrassing. We lived in the back blocks; moved from place to place as conditions became menacing, until 1918.

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I was confronted with a situation that had unconsciously enveloped me. I concluded I could not make matters much worse by marrying her, and did so the latter part of the year 1918.

I mistook her desperation for devotion and have lived to learn what a serious error it was for each of us, and all concerned.

However my whole mind was set upon financial success; the plight of those in Atlanta [his family by his first wife], and duties undone everywhere. Life seemed a Mockery!

My associates often marveled at my application to business, little realizing the press of an accusing conscience behind it all. Then I began to accumulate resources, not money but resources which I expected to turn into money. I had it all planned! You will never know what a glorious feeling it was to realize that I could pay, pay, and pay! and thus in some measure repair the wrong done. Then came the crash and with it the trouble with Annie, with whom the breach had long been widening. I knew perfectly well that you would never accept her and I wanted you here. It was what my heart had for years been set upon. I thought I had found the key to success and that I could just hand it over to you (I mean the three of you [Theodore's three children]) and thus smooth out life's path for you. She was quite determined that you should accept her, nothing less.

The trouble with Annie May Abbey (formerly Abbott) erupted in 1927 into a suit for a divorce and alimony. In the divorce case evidence was presented which convinced the court that Theodore had never been legally divorced from his first wife (Jessie May Harris of Atlanta), and therefore was not

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

legally married to Annie May. There could be no divorce for Annie May from Theodore and thus no alimony.

Meanwhile, in October 1927, while the divorce case was underway, Annie May Abbey also filed a civil action against a woman named Isabelle Fitch for \$50,000, claiming that Theodore had deserted Annie May six months earlier because of Isabelle:

Annie M. Abbey, a married woman deserted by her husband, T. H. Abbey, more than six months prior to the bringing of this suit,... sues Isabelle Fitch, the defendant therein, and alleges:

1. That the plaintiff and one T. H. Abbey, on or about the 18th day of June, 1918, intermarried and ever since have been and now are husband and wife.

2. That between the first day of January, 1925 and the first day of September, 1927, at many times and places in the County of Hillsborough, Florida, and elsewhere throughout the State of Florida, said defendant, Isabelle Fitch, debauched and carnally used the plaintiff's husband, T. H. Abbey, to Plaintiff's damage in the sum of Fifty Thousand (\$50,000) Dollars.

3. As a second cause of action this plaintiff restates paragraph aforesaid and alleges that until on or about the first day of January, 1927, this Plaintiff, Annie M. Abbey, was living and cohabiting with and being supported by her said husband, T. H. Abbey, at Tampa, Florida, and living with him happily and enjoying his support and affection.

4. That said Isabelle Fitch, defendant herein, well knowing the said T. H. Abbey to be the husband of this plaintiff and wrongfully intending to injure and deprive her of her husband's support

and affection, did willfully, wickedly and maliciously destroy and alienate from this plaintiff the affection then and there had by the said T. H. Abbey for the Plaintiff... .

5. That as this plaintiff is informed and believes and therefore avers, the said Isabelle Fitch represented herself to be a wealthy woman with large interests in oil lands in the State of Texas. That under the pretense of business, said defendant made clandestine appointments with the said T. H. Abbey, constantly sought his company, made violent love to him and induced him, the said T. H. Abbey, to take trips through the State of Florida, on which trips the said defendant and the said T. H. Abbey posed as man and wife and registered as such at different hotels wherein they occupied the same room and bed. That many times, both prior to and since the first day of January, 1927, the said defendant debauched and carnally knew the said T. H. Abbey, husband of this plaintiff.

6. That as a result of the said wicked and malicious conduct the love and affection of the said T. H. Abbey for this plaintiff has been destroyed and the plaintiff has been deprived of his support and protection and the said T. H. Abbey has abandoned this plaintiff, to plaintiff's damage \$50,000.³³⁰

Isabelle Fitch denied that Annie May and T. H. Abbey were married on or about the 18th day of June 1918, and pleaded not guilty.³³¹ It is believed that Annie May's suit failed with the resolution of the divorce case and the declaration that Annie May and T. H. were not legally married to begin with.

Annie May was not to be deterred however, for in March 1927, she filed a suit for a partner's share of Theodore's estate,

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and a ruling in the circuit court system eventually gave her a favorable decree. Her attorneys argued that she had contributed largely to the common family welfare from her stage earnings and expensive jewels and that while they were married she had been instrumental in the erection and sale of a dozen or more houses in Tampa. Her attorneys argued that "if a former divorce in which she had no part was the cause of her marriage to Abbey being set aside she then stood in the position of a partner to the man she married and that she should receive a partner's share of what they had earned during the decade of partnership." The judge agreed.³³² The estate was valued at \$110,000 and so Annie May was to receive approximately half that amount.

As the court cases dragged on, Theodore tried to protect his money from Annie May, while perhaps making amends to his long-abandoned family. In August 1928, Theodore attempted to transfer property to Lucile Harris Abbey (his daughter) of Fulton County, Georgia as an indenture in payment for her 18 years of care-giving when she,

*dating from the time she was old enough to earn, contributed her entire earnings to, and for a great part of this period was, the sole support of her mother, the said Jessie M. Abbey, and to the rearing and support of her two younger brothers, estimated at One Hundred Twenty Five (\$125) Dollars per month for eighteen years, or a total of Twenty Seven Thousand (\$27,000) Dollars, and for further personal sacrifices which the grantors herein are unable to estimate, and the further consideration of the love and affection of the said Lucile Harris Abbey for the grantors herein....*³³³

He also deeded land to Mid-Bay Development Company, whose secretary was his son, Leonard B. Abbey.

Theodore's legal wife, Jessie May Harris Abbey, died soon after the court proceedings, and by 1930, Theodore had married Isabelle (Belle) Fitch, the woman accused by Annie

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May of having an affair with Theodore. It was also believed by descendants that he had placed remaining assets in the name of his wife, Belle, and escaped paying the judgment to Annie May by virtue of being a pauper.³³⁴ Until the end of his life, Theodore would be afraid that “That Woman” (Annie May) would get the judgment reinstated, or Belle would not relinquish the assets given to her.

Theodore Abbey and Isabelle Abbey, President and Secretary of T. H. Abbey & Co. conceded at least one small property into receivership for Annie May Abbey, “a single woman,” in April 1932,³³⁵ which she promptly sold for \$70.

On Christmas day, 1931, Theodore wrote the letter to his son, explaining his life. His final comments were:

I can only say in my defense that I have struggled hard to make good my mistakes. The one thing, the most important of all, which I have neglected is the hand of God in man's affairs. Now after all these years I am beginning to see this, and it is my purpose henceforth to lay aside my



Theodore H. Abbey, age 86.
(Courtesy of Leonard B. Abbey)

ambitions and devote myself first to right living. I thought nothing could defeat a persistent, hard worker. I have been brought up with a jerk.

This my son is a brief resume of your father's life. I wish now it might have been different; that at

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*the last I must come to my own children, who have
so charitably forgiven, and acknowledge.*

But I felt that you should know the whole story.

Lovingly, your father,

T. H. Abbey

Theodore retired in about 1935, and he and Isabelle moved in the 1940s to Pahokee, Florida. Neither he nor Isabelle had great wealth; for several years he was bookkeeper for the local Pahokee International Harvester Co. As it turned out, Annie May Abbott's suspicions about Isabelle's representing herself as a wealthy Texas oil baroness were confirmed: after Isabelle and Theodore married, they both were disappointed to learn that the other did not have much money.³³⁶

After his retirement and until his death, Theodore gave his full time to personal evangelism. He died on October 5, 1954 at age 87. Unlike Richard N. Abbey's and Dixie Haygood's funerals, Theodore's funeral at the First Methodist Church of Pahokee was well attended. He left his wife Isabelle Abbey and two sons and one daughter by Jessie M. Harris Abbey. His grandson, Lenny Abbey, remembered him as a man of great probity, dignity and wisdom. He was quiet-spoken, but everybody listened to every word he said. He never missed a Sunday at church and gave generously, though his circumstances were modest. At the end of his life, although not entirely understood by all of his family, he achieved inner peace and the public respect for which he struggled his entire life. He is buried in Hillcrest Cemetery in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Not much is known about Annie May Abbey / Annie May Abbott after the separation from Theodore until her death, but oddly she died just four months after Theodore. Her obituary of February 1, 1955, reads as follows:

Former Actress Dies After Long Illness

*Mrs. Annie May Abbey, a stage actress for
many years until her retirement, 40 years ago, died*

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last night at the age of 82. Her death followed a long illness and only hours after she entered the Fulgo Rest Home.

Wife of the late Theodore Abbey, she was born Annie May Tatro in Ballston Spa and had resided in Troy for the last eight years at 707 Fulton St.

*She is survived by three nieces, Mrs. Fred P. Jones and Mrs. M. J. Hogan, both of Troy, and Mrs. Walter VanNess of St. Petersburg, Fla.*³³⁷

She retained her stage name of Annie May and her married name of Abbey until she died, despite her given name of Matilda³³⁸ and the fact that her marriage to Theodore Abbey was declared null and void. It appears she loved Theodore very much. She died January 31, 1955 and was buried with her father Octave Tatro, her mother Julia Tatro, and other relatives in an unmarked grave in section F-29 of the Ballston Spa Village Cemetery in Saratoga County, New York. Her grave was marked by the authors in May 2010. So ended the life of the amazing Annie May Abbott. The combination of the exhibitions of the original Annie Abbott / Dixie Haygood and her successor, Annie May Abbott / Tillie Tatro, constitute the pinnacle of the Annie Abbott era.

³¹³ 1880 U.S. Federal Census, Napoleon, Henry County, Ohio.

³¹⁴ "Annie May Abbott, The Georgia Magnet." *Evening Times* (Cumberland MD), 30 May 1906..

³¹⁵ Letter from J. V. Abbott dated Jan 7, 1906 found in Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, Florida. J. V. Lane and his address of 6 Brick St, Atlantic City, N.J. were written on an advertising flyer in the possession of Prudence (Marie) Rolfson's great niece, Patty Jones.

³¹⁶ "Five Men Fail to Lift Slim Atlanta Woman," *The Atlanta Journal*, Sunday 10 February 1921.

³¹⁷ The husband of Marie Rolfson was Leonard McLaglen but is sometimes mistakenly reported as Cyril McLaglen (1899-1987). Both McLaglens were actors and brothers of Victor McLaglen.

³¹⁸ Prudence Ward McLeglan (Annie Abbott) Passport Application, October 15, 1918; See also *Billboard*, vol. 55, no. 35 28 August 1943, p. 31; Robert Sherman, *Actors and Authors with Composers and Managers*

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- Who Helped Make Them Famous*, published by Robert L. Sherman, Chicago, 1951, p. 2.
- ³¹⁹ *The Sphinx*, May 1913, p. 58.
- ³²⁰ Graham Noble, "Early Ju-jutsu: The Challenges" retrieved on 19 March 2010 from <http://www.dragon-tsunami.org/Dtimes/Pages/>; *The East African Standard*, 26 October 1912.
- ³²¹ "The Science of Jiu-jitsu," *Japan Times*, 24 March 1914, page 3, retrieved on Mar. 19, 2010 from http://ejmas.com/jnc/jncart_McLaglan_1202.htm.
- ³²² James W. Evans and Captain Gardner L. Harding, *Entertaining the American Army: The American Stage and Lyceum in the World War*, New York: Association Press, 1921.
- ³²³ Price, David. *Magic: A Pictorial History of Conjurers in the Theatre*, 1985.
- ³²⁴ "Five Men Fail to Lift Slim Atlanta Woman," *The Atlanta Journal*, Sunday 10 February 1921.
- ³²⁵ 1920 Federal census of Minneapolis, Hennepin Co., MN.
- ³²⁶ 1920 Census for Hennepin County, MN, taken Jan. 7, 1920.
- ³²⁷ *The Sun-Herald*, Lime Spring, Iowa, 1 September 1927.
- ³²⁸ See Masonic activity as described by Sidney Ormond in "Annie May Abbott Returns Home After Surprising Nations of the World," *The Atlanta Constitution*, 6 Jul 1902, p. 31, col. 1; *Evening Post* (Australia), 15 Mar 1902. Vol. LXIII, Issue 64, p. 3.
- ³²⁹ Theodore H. Abbey's letter to his son, 1931.
- ³³⁰ Annie M. Abbey, by her next friend, M. Caraballo, Plaintiff, vs. Isabelle Fitch, Defendant, #14744, Docket No. 27, Circuit Court in and for the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Hillsborough County, FL.
- ³³¹ 7 November 1927 filing, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit, Hillsborough County, FL.
- ³³² "Judge Decides Man, Wife are Legal Partners: Rules Woman Shares Property of Union," undated newspaper article.
- ³³³ Hillsborough County, Florida, Deed Book 834, p. 100.
- ³³⁴ Lenny Abbey correspondence.
- ³³⁵ Hillsborough County, Florida, Deed Book 949, pp. 459, 471.
- ³³⁶ Personal communication with Lenny Abbey.
- ³³⁷ *Times Record* (Troy, NY), 1 February 1955.
- ³³⁸ Census records of Milton, Saratoga Co, NY for 1880 list Tillie Tatro as an 8-year-old daughter of Octavus and Julia Tatro.

Chapter 17 - Reflections

Reflections on the Annie Abbott Act

At the time of the deaths of the original Annie Abbott (Dixie Haygood) in 1915, her successor and rival, Annie May Abbott (Tillie Tatro), in 1955, and Richard's third Annie Abbott (Prudence Ward Rolfson) in 1943, there was very little recognition of their contribution to entertainment of the time. One can imagine the lively debates and enjoyment at their performances by the thousands who saw them. The various theories about the source of their "power" appeal to everyone. Yet "fame was fleeting" for all of them.

On occasion a spiritualist or spirit hunter visits the original Annie Abbott's (Dixie Haygood's) grave in Milledgeville. Meanwhile magicians remember her for the "Annie Abbott" Act, and pamphlets can be obtained that explain how the Act is done. It is the magicians who remember Annie Abbott the most, and her name is mentioned in various magic history publications. The overlap between spiritualism and magic received attention by Harry Houdini, J. N. Maskelyne, and others, who were devoted to showing that supernatural effects could be done naturally.³³⁹ Houdini described Lulu Hurst and Annie Abbott as follows:

Although (Lulu Hurst) was exposed many times, her success was so marked that several other muscular ladies entered her province with acts that were, in several instances, superior to the original.

One of the cleverest of these was Annie Abbott, who, if I remember rightly, also called herself The Georgia Magnet. She took the act to England and her opening performance at the Alhambra is recorded as one of the three big sensations of the

Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet"

London vaudeville stage of those days. The second sensation was credited to the Bullet-Proof Man. ... The third sensation I must, with all due modesty, (business of bowing) claim for myself.

The Magnet failed to attract after about forty-eight hours, for a keen-witted reporter discovered her methods and promptly published them. The bullet detainer also lasted only a short time only. When my opening added a third sensational surprise, one of the London dailies asked, "Is this going to be another Georgia Magnet fiasco?"

That they were gunning for me is proved by the fact that the same newspaper investigator who exposed the Magnet, came upon the stage of the Alhambra at my press performance -- the same stages where the unhappy Dixie lode-stone had collapsed -- and though he brought along an antique slave iron, which he seemed to think would put an end to my public career on the spot, I managed to escape in less than three minutes... .³⁴⁰

As pointed out by Houdini and Barry Wiley,³⁴¹ the key element in the electric girl success is the stage manager. It was the manager who managed audience expectations, maintained interest if things did not work out as planned, and created an ambiance about the electric girl. In the case of Mattie Lee Price, Lulu Hurst, and, as shown in this book, Annie Abbott, the manager became the girl's husband. Like Mattie Lee Price, when Dixie Haygood broke up with her manager and presumed husband, Richard N. Abbey, her act deteriorated, never to be the same again. Even though the act had been extensively performed in many parts of the world, Richard went on to some success with Tillie Tatro (a.k.a. Annie May Abbott), particularly in less "played out" parts of the world. Prudence Ward Rolfson likewise benefitted from Richard's guidance.

Of interest is the fact that Richard N. Abbey was married to both the original Annie Abbott and her successor, Annie May Abbott, who were the ones who set the trend and gave the act a name recognizable around the world. In many ways, one wonders if the Act would have been as widely known if the Act had not been performed simultaneously and in tandem by these two talented women. In some ways, the authors feel the recognition for the Act should go to Richard, who, sadly, was unrecognized as a vital part of the Act until his role was discovered during research for this book.

Reflections on Marriage

When thinking about the lives of the people involved in this story, one may marvel at the rate at which marriages were abandoned for new spouses. This phenomenon may be related to the fact that avenues for divorce were few at that time. For example, in Georgia, early 1800s divorce required the General Assembly to pass a bill granting the divorce; in the mid 1800s Judges of the Superior Court could grant divorces, but with very limited grounds.³⁴² Only 33 divorces per 100,000 people were granted in the South in 1900, and the most common single grounds for divorce was desertion.³⁴³ It was difficult to get a divorce, but if one was going to try, desertion may have been viewed as the first step.

In addition, in the late 19th century, spiritualism was associated with the free-love movement. The “free love” movement during the Victorian era referred not to unrestrained lustful pursuits but to the belief that the individual has the right to make and remake his or her love and sexual relations without consulting or coercion from any authority -- religious or legal.³⁴⁴ Books published at the time (e.g., Lois Waisbrooker’s book, *My Century Plant*³⁴⁵) advocated free love. The more radical spiritualists, and those who believed in them, believed they could control electricity and other natural phenomena, and believed that God, nature and humankind were one, with no hell, atonement or salvation.³⁴⁶ Spiritualism

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freed the individual from organized religion and recognized social authority. It was believed that true love created true marriage.³⁴⁷

While many spiritualists did not support free love, most free love advocates were spiritualists, and so the two were intertwined in the public's mind.³⁴⁸ Whether the characters described in this book adhered to these views is unknown, but at the least they were exposed to these thoughts and trends as they interacted and traveled the world with other performers.

Reflections on Dixie Haygood (Annie Abbott)

It is with mixed feelings that one reflects on the life of Dixie Haygood. The numerous jewel thefts and short-lived marriages may have been real, or they may have been staged for publicity purposes. It is difficult to tell. Certainly the mirth of some of the newspaper articles reveals a certain comedic nature of the marital breakups, and one wonders if the whole thing was just a way to get free publicity for her Act.

Her ability to appear as an honest and fragile little woman early in her career seemed to be affected by her European tour. Her appearance also changed after the tour. That she easily disowned her children while occasionally kidnapping a wayward waif is also puzzling. One wonders if drugs were involved, as it appears that she was a morphine user for at least part of her life. Her son, Fred, also claimed that she was a heavy drug user as she lay on her death bed. One must remember that morphine was a legal, over-the-counter drug for most of her acting career, and its effects were not fully realized until the early 20th century. It may very well have been a factor in her behavior.

Final Reflections on the Passing of the Annie Abbotts

Despite the remarkable careers of the original Annie Abbott (Dixie Haygood) and her successor, Annie May Abbott (Tillie Tatro), both died virtually alone, with no close relatives

at their sides. Similarly Annie Abbott in the form of Prudence Ward Rolfson was described as having no known relatives. Their various husbands were nowhere to be found, and Dixie's children, whom she had abandoned or disowned, were for the most part unaware of her death. Both Annie Abbott and Annie May Abbott were buried in unmarked graves until the years 2001 and 2010, when the research of the authors led to grave markers being placed. While neither Annie Abbott was remembered fondly by those who knew her, the Annie Abbott stage presence and "power" were remarkable, and the lives of these women are an example of the difficulties faced by a vaudeville performer / magician / spiritualist of the 1890s and early 1900s.

The Annie Abbott act not only was imitated at the same time that Dixie Haygood (Annie Abbott), Tillie Tatro (Annie May Abbott) and Prudence Ward Rolfson (Marie Rolfson / Annie Abbott) were performing, but it also continued to be performed after their retirement. Among the more successful was Miss Mary Richardson, who "displayed the same occult force" in 1921 at the Olympia Music Hall, Liverpool.³⁴⁹ Magicians still use elements of the Act to this day.

One hundred years after the original Annie Abbott's death, people are still attracted to the elements and story of Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet." Perhaps, in the final analysis, that is the true power of Annie Abbott.

³³⁹ Pecor, *Magician on the American Stage*, p. 292.

³⁴⁰ *Miracle Mongers and Their Methods*, Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1981, pp. 228-229.

³⁴¹ Barry H. Wiley, *The Georgia Wonder: Lulu Hurst and the Secret That Shook America*, Seattle, Washington: Hermetic Press, Inc., 2005.

³⁴² Personal communication of Earnie Breeding, lawyer, 5 September 2001.

³⁴³ Glenda Riley, *Divorce, An American Tradition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 86-87.

³⁴⁴ J. W. Towler in Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America*, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p.21; Pam McAllister, Introduction to *Women in the Lead: Waisbrooker's Way to Peace*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia: 1985.

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³⁴⁵ Waisbrooker, Lois, *My Century Plant*, Topeka, KS, Independent Publishing Co., 1896.

³⁴⁶ Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1997.

³⁴⁷ Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America*, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977.

³⁴⁸ Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001, p. 129.

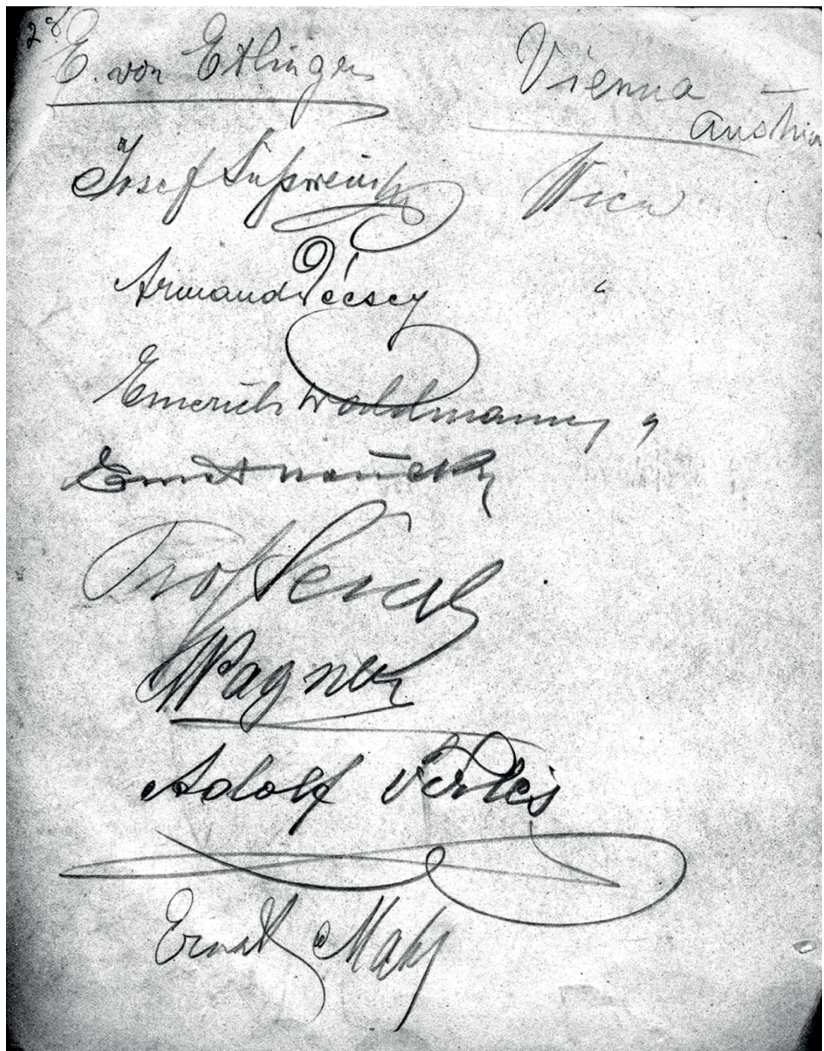
³⁴⁹ A. Campbell Holms, *The Facts of Psychic Science and Philosophy, Collated and Discussed*. University Books, Inc., New Hyde Park, New York, 1969.

Appendix A - Annie Abbott's Autograph Album and Diary

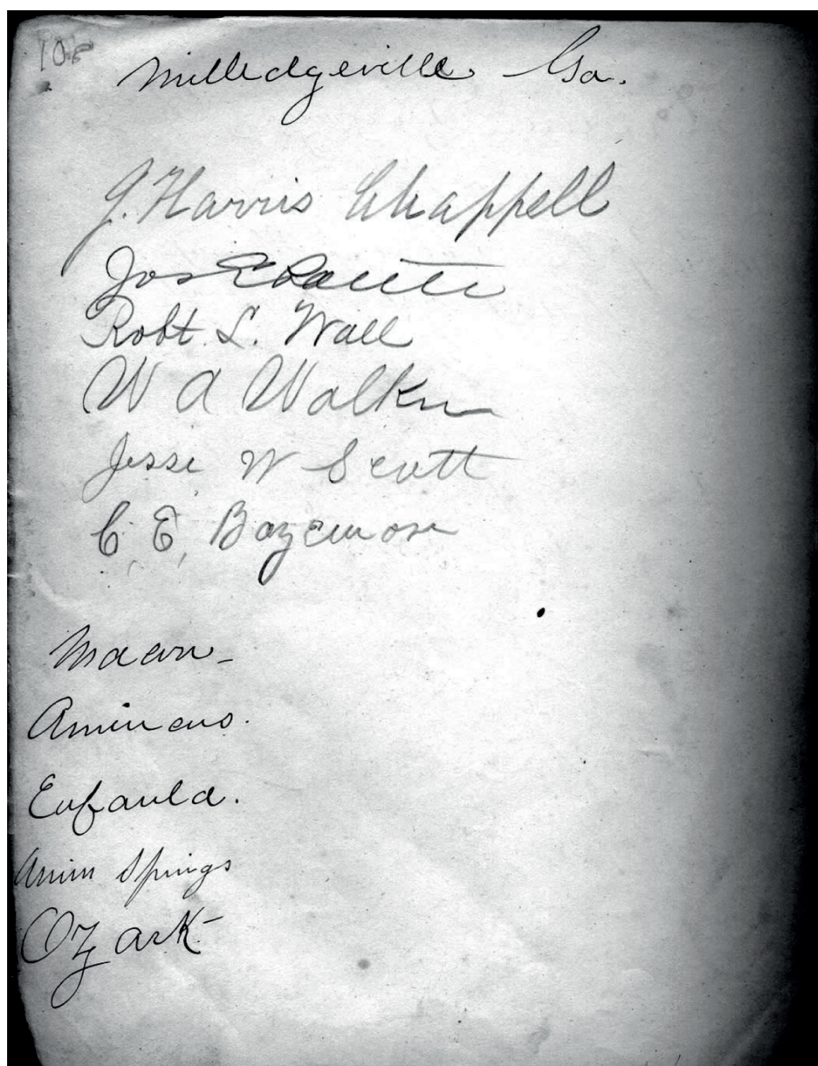
There was much confusion about the travels and the identity of Annie Abbott. The performances of Dixie Haygood, the original Annie Abbott, were able to be identified and separated from those of her imitators with the assistance of her Autograph Album, which she carried with her from 1891 until 1896, and her diary, which covers 1892. These books were found by Dixie Haygood's descendants, thereby initiating the study which resulted in this book.

The Autograph Album consists of pages of signatures of those attending her performances. While the pages covering 1891 have been removed, the emphasis is on 1892, which was one of Dixie Haygood's most successful years. On the following pages are examples of two pages from the Autograph Album, the first including "Josef Supremus" (Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, signed in Vienna, Austria in 1892) and the second containing the signature of J. Harris Chappell (the president of Georgia Normal and Industrial College in Milledgeville, Georgia, Dixie Haygood's home town, on October 31, 1893).

Also included is an example of a page from her diary.



A page from Annie Abbott's / Dixie Haygood's autograph album with the Austro-Hungarian Empire emperor's signature (Josef Supremus).



Another page from the autograph album, with signatures from Milledgeville, Georgia and places visited written by Annie Abbott.

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MARCH 14—20.	[31 DAYS.
3RD MONTH.]	MARCH, 1892.
[12TH WEEK.	
<p>MONDAY, 14th. a stroll with Jennie. her last day with us: good miss. good Communion. Sent Jennie Easter Cards & to the orphanage. & to Hattie & her family. & to the Grand & Grand Magie Landon Adams. & to Berlin.</p>	[74th day—292 to come
<p>TUESDAY, 15th. Jennie was left for Del. to see Mr. Charlie. to the mission & Mary's work. good. Mrs. well. pleasant. good Communion. Telegram to Jennie & London at the Albion. Mrs. came to make a return.</p>	
<p>WEDNESDAY, 16th. to the Bank sent Mamma One Hundred & 25 Dols. Cash on new. Mrs. brought a pocket case. knife. plow with the 3 Emperors. <u>Best</u> good house.</p>	[76—290
<p>THURSDAY, 17th.—St. Patrick's Day. Staged in Holy day. & Sunday: very good. under good Communion. Very unwell all day.</p>	[77—289
<p>good food. Splendid Communion. FRIDAY, 18th. a late. seven headaches. expect to go to have photo.</p>	[78—288
<p>Yakov. seven letters to Mrs. prepared a cigar. older in my chair. & to Mrs. a new plate with the 3 Emperors. & Hattie & her family. for garden. it is a</p>	
<p>SATURDAY, 19th. Very fine day. fixed with iron & ed. friends. returned to hotel. dressed for the <u>Queen</u> good house in bed all day Sunday sick.</p>	[79—287
<p>called. wireless. gave me 19. View of Hamburg. Sunday, 20th.—3rd Sunday in Lent. And Berlin a photo of Family. T. Embroidered apron. a</p>	[80—286

A page from Annie Abbott's diary.

Appendix B - Annie Abbotts and their Spouses

Below is a table that shows the three Annie Abbotts included in this book, along with their spouses or partners posing as spouses. Since the Annie Abbotts had multiple spouses who often crossed paths, the table below may help you as you encounter each character in the book.

Table 1. Spouses or Partners Posing as Spouses

Individual and alternate names used	Spouse or Partner acting as Spouse	Spouse or Partner Timeframe, and Children
Dixie Annie Jarratt / Dixie Haygood / Mrs. C. N. Haygood / Annie Abbott / Mrs. Frank C. Baylor		
	Charles N. Haygood	Apr. 28, 1878 - Feb. 27, 1886 Children: Hattie C. Haygood (died as infant) Maud C. Haygood Fred H. Haygood Charlie Haygood
	T. L. Embry	May? 1888 - October? 1888
	Richard N. Abbey	1889 - December 1893
	J. C. Hearne	Nov. 11, 1894 - July 1895 Unnamed daughter (mentioned in poisoning incident)

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Individual and alternate names used	Spouse or Partner acting as Spouse	Spouse or Partner Timeframe, and Children
	Frank C. Baylor	ca. 1899 -ca. 1904 Harold Baylor Helen Baylor
	James A. Feldman	1909
	Armand De Villers	Jan. 1, 1910
Richard N. Abbey / Mr. Abbott / Mr. A.		
	Fannie Dora Snowden	June 20, 1872 - 1889 Minnie V. Abbey Claud Y. Abbey (died young) Annie B. Abbey Bessie X. Abbey
	Dixie Haygood (original Annie Abbott)	1889 - December 1893
	Tillie Tatro (Annie May Abbott)	1893, with formal marriage 1902. Marriage ending 1903
	Myrtle Stone Beers	Dec. 24, 1915 - sometime before 1927
Matilda Tatro/ Tillie Tatro / Annie May Tatro / Annie May Abbott / Annie May Abbey		
	Richard N. Abbey	1893, with formal marriage 1902. Marriage ending 1903

Appendix B - Annie Abbotts and their Spouses

Individual and alternate names used	Spouse or Partner acting as Spouse	Spouse or Partner Timeframe, and Children
	Theodore H. Abbey	Partnered from 1903 until June 18, 1918 when formally married. Marriage declared void by court in 1927
Theodore H. Abbey / Mr. Abbott		
	Jessie May Harris	Feb. 26, 1889 - 1929 Lucile H. Abbey Theodore H. Abbey Guy H. Abbey (died young) Leonard B. Abbey
	Tillie Tatro / Annie May Abbott	Partnered from 1903 until June 18, 1918 when formally married. Marriage declared void by court in 1927
	Isabelle (Belle) Fitch	1930-1954

(Table continues next page.)

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Prudence Ward / Prudence McLaglen / Annie Abbott / Marie Rolfson / Prudence Rolfson		
	Harry Rolfson	June 20, 1889-1943 (was using Rolfson as last name when she died, but did not use Rolfson on her passport in 1918 when passport shows her as Prudence Ward McLaglen [widow]).
	Leonard McLaglen	Manager / partner starting around 1908 and probably ending before 1918

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The Magic of Annie Abbott

*For the first time -- the true story of the
creation of the world famous*

Annie Abbott Act is revealed

*through hundreds of eyewitness accounts
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This is the complete, documented story of Milledgeville, Georgia's *Dixie Haygood*, who as Annie Abbott, "The Little Georgia Magnet," captivated the world and puzzled scientists in the late 1800s and early 1900s with her unexplained power.

*Dixie Haygood, who weighed only 96 pounds,
used her extraordinary power to overcome the
strongest men in the world. And she could
transfer her power to children!*

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Dr. Susan J. Harrington and Hugh T. Harrington have researched Dixie Haygood for over 10 years. Their articles on Annie Abbott appeared in *The Linking Ring* magazine, where they won "Best Article Series of 2003." Their seminal article on Annie Abbott was published in *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. Together they have published dozens of articles and several history books.